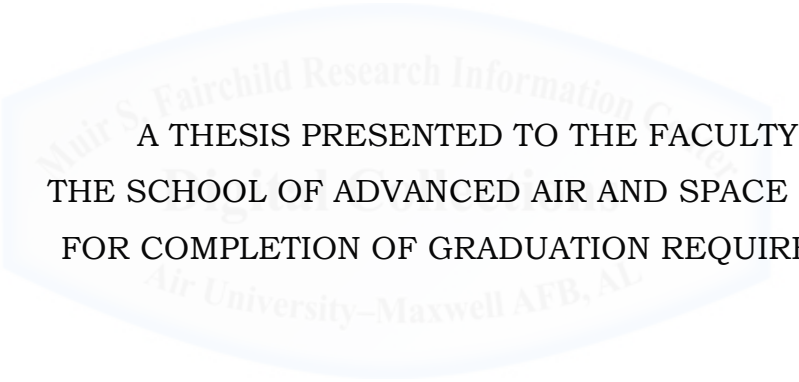


“A KERNEL OF AIR FORCE STRATEGY: DIAGNOSIS, GUIDING POLICY,  
AND COHERENT ACTION IN THE LATE 1940s”

BY  
SEAN NEITZKE



A THESIS PRESENTED TO THE FACULTY OF  
THE SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES  
FOR COMPLETION OF GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS

SCHOOL OF ADVANCED AIR AND SPACE STUDIES  
AIR UNIVERSITY  
MAXWELL AIR FORCE BASE, ALABAMA  
JUNE 2014

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE <b>JUN 2014</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2014 to 00-00-2014</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>A Kernel Of Air Force Strategy: Diagnosis, Guiding Policy, A Coherent Action In The Late 1940s</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>School of Advanced Air And Space Studies,,Air University,,Maxwell Air Force Base,,AL</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT <b>This thesis analyzes the Air Force???'s effectiveness in surviving the trough between World War II and the Korean War. This five-year period between 1945 and 1950 was turbulent for all military services, but was unique for the United States??? air-arm. In addition to enduring the same external pressures as the Army and Navy, the Air Force had to stand-up as an independent service.</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT <b>Same as Report (SAR)</b>	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>120</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

## **APPROVAL**

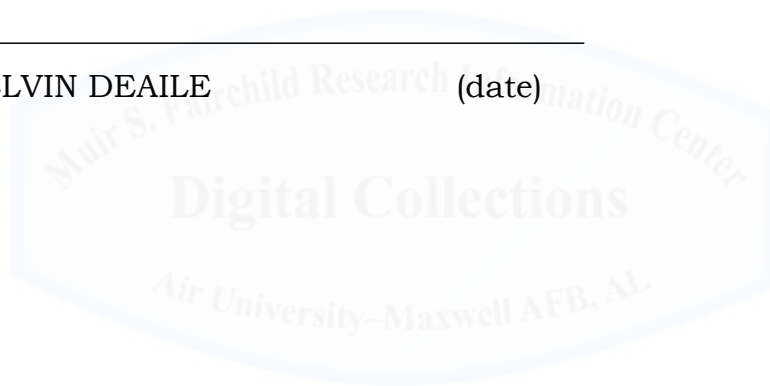
The undersigned certify that this thesis meets master's-level standards of research, argumentation, and expression.

---

DR. THOMAS A. HUGHES (date)

---

DR. MELVIN DEAILE (date)



## **DISCLAIMER**

The conclusions and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author. They do not reflect the official position of the US Government, Department of Defense, the United States Air Force, or Air University.



## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Lt Col Sean Neitzke was commissioned from the United States Air Force Academy in 1999. He is a graduate of Specialized Undergraduate Pilot Training and the United States Air Force Weapons School with multiple operational tours in the F-16 as an instructor pilot. Lt Col Neitzke also has experience as an F-16 operational test pilot, a USAF aggressor pilot, and a USAF Weapons School Instructor. He holds advanced degrees from the USAF Air Command and Staff School, and the School of Advanced Air and Space Studies. In July 2014, he will be assigned to the 85<sup>th</sup> Test and Evaluation Squadron at Eglin AFB, FL as the Director of Operations.



## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

I would like to acknowledge several people without whose support and help I would never have gotten off the ground with this study.

First, the patience, encouragement, and ideas of Dr. Thomas Hughes and Dr. Melvin Deaile helped immeasurably to challenge and inspire me to pursue and complete this project. Similarly, my fellow students at SAASS helped make this year the most intellectually challenging of my life. Their professional expertise and wisdom created an unparalleled working and social environment.

I especially want to thank my family for their patient support this year. There is no way to express in words the love and appreciation I have for each of you for enduring this year of academic adventure with me.

Finally, no project of this magnitude is ever really complete or perfect, any errors in interpretation or expression of the facts are mine alone.



## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis analyzes the Air Force's effectiveness in surviving the trough between World War II and the Korean War. This five-year period between 1945 and 1950 was turbulent for all military services, but was unique for the United States' air-arm. In addition to enduring the same external pressures as the Army and Navy, the Air Force had to stand-up as an independent service.

This thesis shows how the Army Air Forces (AAF) was destroyed by demobilization, then recreated as an independent Air Force, and finally fulfilled its obligations as the vanguard of defense. The AAF dropped from 218 combat effective groups to two in just over one year, but its leaders effectively fought to keep quality airmen. Generals Arnold and Spaatz then created an independent Air Force by successfully defeating external threats from General Marshall's Universal Military Training program and the Navy's bid for a strategic bombing force of its own. Finally, the Air Force fulfilled its new role as the primary keeper of national defense by effectively prioritizing its resources into a single mission.

The Air Force endured this turbulent five-year period through an effective mix of prioritizing, competing, and compromising. This thesis highlights Air Force strategy, examining it through the lens of Richard Rumelt's three-part kernel of effective strategy: an accurate diagnosis, an effective guiding policy, and a series of useful coherent actions. Although the Air Force stumbled in the early rounds of its fight with Korea in 1950, it went on to survive the fight and eventually win the title bout of the Cold War. The decisions made between 1945 and 1950 laid the foundation for victory in both fights. This story resonates today as the United States' civilian leaders end two wars, constrain Air Force resources, impinge its structure, and rely on it as the backbone of national defense in an increasingly ambiguous world order. Airmen today could do much worse than to look to these forbearers for inspiration, guidance, and fortitude going forward. The nation's citizenry counts on it.

## CONTENTS

	<i>Page</i>
DISCLAIMER.....	iii
ABOUT THE AUTHOR .....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	v
ABSTRACT .....	vi
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: Diagnosis—Destruction of the Army Air Force .....	5
The Experience of WWI Demobilization .....	6
Plans for WWII Demobilization.....	10
Execution of WWII Demobilization .....	21
Effects of Demobilization .....	29
Summary .....	33
Chapter 2: Guiding Policy—Creation of the US Air Force.....	35
External Challenges .....	36
General Marshall and Universal Military Training.....	39
Creating a Force in Being.....	42
Internal Challenges .....	47
Independence, Roles, and Missions.....	59
Summary .....	64
Chapter 3: Coherent Action—Fulfilling Obligations .....	66
Defining an Enemy .....	67
Internal Reorganization and Priorities.....	74
SAC Focuses on Efficiency and Generalization.....	76
Operation Vittles .....	87



SAC Focuses on Effectiveness and Specialization.....	89
Korean War .....	95
Summary .....	99
Conclusion and Evaluation.....	102
Bibliography.....	109



## Introduction

In January of 1943, American WWII forces under the command of General Dwight Eisenhower began to cut their teeth against the German Wehrmacht, fighting alongside seasoned British forces enroute to victory at Tripoli, and four months later across all of North Africa.<sup>1</sup> On the Eastern front, the Soviet Air Force was in the final stages of its air blockade against the Luftwaffe, cutting them off from resupplying the Wehrmacht's Sixth Army isolated in Stalingrad, a first step in the Soviet offensive campaign.<sup>2</sup> In the Pacific theatre, an intense battle was raging between Japanese and American forces over control of New Guinea, and three years of hard fighting remained before the Japanese would surrender. In Western Europe, in the first all-American bomber raid against Germany, 64 B-17s and 27 B-24s successfully bombed submarine bases at Ports Wilhelmshaven and Emden marking a new front in a years-long bombing campaign.<sup>3</sup> The war was far from over, and the United States was just beginning to sharpen its skills and ramp up its materiel production to fight the war at hand. But the tide had turned, and Allied victory was a matter of time and cost, not outcome.

At this moment, a small group of US military officers commenced planning for the period after WWII. In peacetime, all military organizations engage in essential tasks, among them to “prepare for a future war 1) that will occur at some indeterminate point in the future, 2) against an opponent who may not yet be identified, 3) in political conditions which one cannot accurately predict, and 4) in an arena of

---

<sup>1</sup> Richard Holmes, *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003), 656.

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 3 of *Red Phoenix Rising* has a detailed discussion of the Soviet Air Force's efforts to successfully win the battle at Stalingrad. Von Hardesty and Ilya Grinberg, *Red Phoenix Rising: The Soviet Air Force in World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), 150–153.

<sup>3</sup> “Americans Bomb Germans for First Time,” *The History Channel Website*, accessed February 10, 2014, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/americans-bomb-germans-for-first-time>.

brutality and violence which one cannot replicate.”<sup>4</sup> This is the story of the small group of airmen who undertook this role in the period between WWII and The Korean War.

This era provides a stark example of the United States Air Force managing all four of these considerations. All the services faced a rapid and devastating scale of demobilization, a trying battle over the appropriate size of the peacetime military, and an exhaustive planning effort for the next war. The US Navy, US Army Ground Forces, and US Army Air Forces each had to deal with the same external pressures of the time, but the Air Force did so while also creating an independent force structure and providing the nation’s vanguard for security in an emerging air-centric defense.

The American people and Congress wanted US troops home as soon as possible when WWII ended, leading to rapid demobilization. The service planners predicted this based upon the sheer number of Americans in uniform and the demobilization experience of WWI. When WWI ended, there was a severe public backlash against the Army as unforeseen and unplanned delays occurred in the return of US service members.<sup>5</sup> The services would not wait until the last minute to begin planning for the end of the fighting in WWII.

President Truman, Congress, and the American people also desired a small standing peacetime military. The United States had never tolerated a large standing military between wars, preferring instead a combination of a small standing-force with the strategic advantages of geographic isolation. This isolation created a buffer of time during which the military could train sufficient forces, and industry could manufacture enough wartime material for the conflict. As long as the President and

---

<sup>4</sup> Williamson Murray, “Innovation: Past and Future,” in *Innovation in the Interwar Period* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 301.

<sup>5</sup> John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army* (Washington Dept of the Army, 1952), 17–19.

Congress held the keys to the national funding purse, military planners had to operate under this desire for a small force despite their contrary view that new technology had invalidated the assumption that the United States was geographically isolated from strategic national threats. This pressure created a battle between the services over the size of their standing peacetime forces.

Although these pressures affected the Navy, the Army Ground Forces, and the Army Air Forces between WWII and the Korean War, it was an exceptionally challenging period for the United States Air Forces. In addition to those universal external pressures, the Air Forces also faced the tasks and pressures associated with gaining independence from the Army. To gain independence, the Air Force had to define carefully its desired responsibilities, confining them to mission areas supporting the argument for independence. Next, it had to overhaul and reinvent its personnel structure to support those new roles and missions. These missions would also quickly force the fledgling service into the limelight as the vanguard of defense for United States. The Air Force effectively presented itself not only as an economical solution to national security, but also as a rapidly deployable small force with vast destructive power, that was able to fulfill the needs of national policy in a more effective and efficient manner than the Army or Navy. The Air Force accomplished this reorganization in the wake of the massive demobilization of WWII and on the bow wave of the impending Cold War, a short and exceptionally dynamic interwar period.

Many different authors have chronicled and analyzed the individual topics of WWII demobilization, the creation of the United States Air Force, and its first plans for the Cold War. They tend to highlight the pitfalls of Air Force efforts in specific areas. The purpose of this thesis is to evaluate how well the Air Forces of the United States accomplished all three major tasks in an exceptionally challenging

environment, and weathered the storm of its first interwar period between WWII and the Korean War.

In order to answer this question, this thesis uses a more broad scope than much academic work, using Richard Rumelt's kernel of good strategy as framework for analysis. The kernel of good strategy consists of a diagnosis, a guiding policy, and a set of coherent actions. First, the diagnosis of strategy explains the nature of the challenge and identifies critical obstacles. Second, the guiding policy provides an overall approach to overcome those obstacles. Finally, a set of coherent actions are coordinated steps that accomplish the guiding policy.<sup>6</sup> This thesis will highlight each of these components as a part of the Air Force strategy during the period of analysis. A limitation of this thesis is that despite its broad scope, it also ignores topics that do not specifically relate to the Air Force during this period. It does not examine one topic across all three services, nor does it dwell exclusively on interservice concerns. This thesis is about the Air Force as an institution, but it also describes the actions of certain individuals who distinctively influenced the institution. This work is accomplished by using mostly secondary sources including published histories, biographies, and topic-specific scholarly work.

Alone among the nation's services, the Air Force tore down a large wartime structure, built up a new independent organization, and occupied the mantel piece of the nation's defense in the years following World War II. How well did they do?

---

<sup>6</sup> See Chapter 5 for a discussion of 'The Kernel of Good Strategy' in Richard Rumelt, *Good Strategy Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Business, 2011), 77-94.

## Chapter 1: Diagnosis—Destruction of the Army Air Force

*The closer...political probabilities drive war toward the absolute...the more imperative the need not to take the first step without considering the last.*

-Clausewitz

The last step of the Second World War for the United States mattered. The demobilization following the cessation of hostilities against both Germany and Japan created a cascade of effects that rippled through the late 1940s and affected the United States' ability to wage war against its next enemy.

The shell of the Air Forces combat capability left in the wake of demobilization is summed up in a letter from Maj Gen Saint Clair Streett, Deputy Commander of the Continental Air Forces, to General Henry Arnold, Commander of the United States Army Air Forces, in October 1945:

It is clearly apparent that the emphasis on demobilization has served to obscure the fact that we will have soon reached a point, if it has not been reached, at which the *Army Air Forces can no longer be considered anything more than a symbolic instrument of national defense...* Our Zone of Interior potential, because of the “willy-nilly” discharge of trained maintenance specialists and key men, is rapidly becoming impotent to provide anything in the form of units approaching the combat capacity which would be required in the event of any emergency. *The attitude of Russia, if gleaned from no other source than the newspapers, should serve to jar any complacency we might now have as to a final and entirely satisfactory settlement of the Peace.* [italics added]<sup>1</sup>

Gen Carl Spaatz, the first Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, highlighted the principal cause of the massive destruction of

---

<sup>1</sup> Ltr, Maj Gen St. Clair Streett to Gen H.H. Arnold, 8 Oct 1945, no subject, quoted in John C. Sparrow, *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army* (Washington Dept of the Army, 1952), 268–269.

airpower following WWII. “The primary and compelling cause of the accelerated demobilization of the Air Force, as of the other armed services, was the demand of the public to get the men home and out of uniform.”<sup>2</sup> General Spaatz correctly saw demobilization, an eventually the accompanying resource constraints, as the major obstacles within the diagnosis of an effective Air Force Strategy. General Eisenhower referred to the demand of the public as an “emotional wave to get men out of the Army” reaching “proportions of near-hysteria.”<sup>3</sup> Even President Truman recorded, “the program we were following was no longer demobilization; it was disintegration of our armed forces.”<sup>4</sup>

An examination of the planning and actual demobilization reveals a sincere effort by military planners to comb the past for clues on how to demobilize in a manner that balanced the desire of soldiers and their families with ongoing requirements for national defense. Despite their best efforts, the myriad of complications these planners faced resulted in a hollow US Army Air Force.

### **The Experience of WWI Demobilization**

The experience of WWI demobilization shaped the judgment of several crucial WWII Army leaders. Col Henry Stimpson, Col George Marshall, Col John McAuley, Lt Col Dwight Eisenhower, and Maj Carl Spaatz all witnessed first-hand the public demand for rapid demobilization after the Great War as well as the military’s failure to plan properly for its execution. Their collective memories played upon the stage of demobilization following WWII. World War I came to an abrupt end on November 11, 1918, catching military planners flat-footed in their preparations to bring home the troops. The US Army had only 291,800 soldiers in the service seventeen months earlier, but by the end of the

---

<sup>2</sup> Carl Spaatz, *Report of the Chief of Staff United States Air Force to the Secretary of the Air Force* (Washington DC: Department of the Air Force, June 30, 1948), 7.

<sup>3</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 7.

<sup>4</sup> Harry S. Truman, *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: 1945 Year of Decisions*, 1st ed., vol. 1 (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1955), 506–509.



war it had been supplemented by more than 3 million 'emergency troops' that were now suddenly eligible for discharge. The service had only begun its planning for demobilization in October 1918, when the War Department finally gave serious thought to the problem of post-war drawdown.<sup>5</sup> After the armistice, the Army quickly learned demobilization had one impelling motive, to relieve public, journalistic, and Congressional pressure by responding to the demand, "Bring the boys home!"<sup>6</sup> The result was a mess, as Frederic Paxson, a prominent historian, described: "There were times in the history of mobilization in which the government of the United States looked like a madhouse; during demobilization there was lacking even the madhouse in which the crazy might be incarcerated. They were at large."<sup>7</sup>

The Army had delegated demobilization planning to a single person, Col C.H. Conrad Jr., then working in the Army War Plans Division.<sup>8</sup> Colonel Conrad hurriedly generated several different options for use as the basis of a plan. He based four different options for discharges on length of service, industrial needs or occupational specialty, original locality, or military unit.<sup>9</sup> The first option was not optimal because most overseas troops had only been deployed for six months or less, and many of the service troops had been in Europe longer than the combat troops, inviting conflict amongst Army personnel. Colonel Conrad dismissed the second option because it would impair military efficiency by breaking up units, required massive amounts of data from stateside businesses, and because the British had already attempted this method and quickly given up after a terribly painful and

---

<sup>5</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 11.

<sup>6</sup> Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 7, *Services Around the World* (Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 547.

<sup>7</sup> Quoted in John G. Sparrow, *History of personnel Demobilization in the United States Army* (Washington, DC, 1952), 5-7, in Craven and Cate, *The AAF in WWII*, 7:545.

<sup>8</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 12.

<sup>9</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 12-13.



short experience.<sup>10</sup> The third method, based on local draft boards, was dismissed due to the impossibility of standardizing the 4,648 boards located throughout the United States as well as a general lack of facilities.<sup>11</sup> The fourth option, dismissal by unit, was favored for its perceived flexibility, simplicity, and its ability to discharge a wide cross section of personnel swiftly. Eventually the Army adopted what it saw as the most uncomplicated method available, demobilization by unit.<sup>12</sup>

Although chosen for its simplicity, this plan did not treat all soldiers equally. Gen John J. Pershing, commanding general of American Expeditionary Forces Europe, retained the authority to determine who would return home from the theater and when. The Army focused primarily on the 'emergency troops,' leaving many of the Regular Army Units in place throughout Europe to become the last units to return home.<sup>13</sup> The Army also immediately discharged approximately 81,000 soldiers classified as anthracite coal miners, railroad employees, and railway mail clerks based upon the demand for trained specialists in their field back home.<sup>14</sup> This seems a small but direct use of Colonel Conrad's second option even though the Army chose the fourth option. In another contradiction of policy, the Chief of Staff of the Army decreed in February 1919 that all soldiers who were in Europe on November 11, 1918 were eligible for discharge, except for those in the Regular Army, medical personnel, and those engaged in administrative work dealing with demobilization. The Army used this final exception to keep units on active duty once they returned to the United States, but this group

---

<sup>10</sup> This option required occupational records for every soldier, a regional survey of local labor supply and demand, a centralized clearing of that supply and demand, and the administration of release and allocation by the United States Employment Service. Riots occurred throughout British forces when attempting this method. Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 13–14.

<sup>11</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Craven and Cate, *The AAF in WWII*, 7:546.

<sup>13</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 15.

<sup>14</sup> James Mock and Evangeline Thurber, *Report on Demobilization* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1944), 127–128 in Craven and Cate, *The AAF in WWII*, 7:547.

complained “so bitterly” that they were eventually replaced by civilians.<sup>15</sup> So even the simplest plan for demobilization was complicated by several exceptions during its implementation.

In addition to unequal treatment of soldiers, the demobilization plan was under fire from the public and Congress for being too slow on the one hand and for flooding local labor markets on the other hand. Between November 1918 and November 1919, the Army mustered out 3,416,066 men. During its peak month, December 1918, the Army dismissed 646,043 men in 31 days.<sup>16</sup> Despite these staggering figures, it was not fast enough to satisfy the demand of the American public or its elected officials. An Army Operations Branch memo sent to the Chief of Staff complained of immense interference with their daily work caused by the flood of letters from the public and Congress complaining about the completely inadequate speed with which the Army discharged their friends, family members, and constituents. They felt each letter dignified a response, thereby absorbing a large amount of time better devoted to finding greater demobilization efficiencies.<sup>17</sup> Many troops were transported to Europe by allied and neutral vessels, but after the war these allies used much of their shipping capacity to transport their own colonial troops, leaving the United States a drastically smaller maritime capacity to return US soldiers then was available to deploy them.<sup>18</sup> No matter how hard the Army pushed, it could not get soldiers home fast enough to quench the thirst of the American public for the return of its warriors.

Once in the United States, the Army gave each soldier a discharge bonus of \$60, a uniform, a pair of shoes, and an overcoat to help ease

---

<sup>15</sup> WD Circular 77, 1918 and *Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) Bulletin* No. 784, 58, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 16.

<sup>16</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 300.

<sup>17</sup> Memo, Chief of Operations Branch to the Chief of Staff, 30 Nov 1918, sub: Publicity Concerning Discharge, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 17.

<sup>18</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 38.

their transition back to civilian life. Each individual was discharged as close to his home of record as possible, and the railroad offered reduced rates in an effort to entice soldiers to return home as soon as possible rather than loiter in large cities to squander their bonus pay.<sup>19</sup> Despite these efforts, this plan still created many labor disputes. Many communities had a surplus of labor due to the combination of war-related industries closing and a large influx of discharged soldiers. The Department of Labor commented that the situation reflected the “haste with which the reversal from mobilization to demobilization was undertaken,” and claimed a demobilization plan based on local labor markets would have been more desirable for the good of the country.<sup>20</sup>

The planning and execution of WWI demobilization appears to have been a last-minute effort, created by one officer, based on the most simple and executable plan. The execution of demobilization created an uproar in the American public leading to invasive inquiries from Congress, labor market issues, and a general distrust of the military’s efforts to bring rapidly its citizen-soldiers home. Incredibly, Gen Peyton C. March, Chief of Staff of the Army, thought the demobilization of WWI was “a method which should be adopted in any future demobilization” if the nation should be “unfortunate enough to have to engage again in a war of major dimensions.”<sup>21</sup> The planners for WWII demobilization would not heed General March’s advice.

### **Plans for WWII Demobilization**

Military planning for demobilization following WWII started much earlier than it did following WWI. The military had been derelict in its preparation for the demobilization of The Great War, and Congress, the public, and the military would not stand for a repeat experience.

---

<sup>19</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 17.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> Peyton C. March, *The Nation at War* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc, 1932), 329.

There was no direct guidance from the President to the Army to commence planning for the end of WWII. Instead, the National Resources Planning Board sent a letter to the Secretary of War asking that he keep the board informed of any demobilization planning efforts. The National Resources Planning Board was an executive office asked by the President to collate post-war plans and programs of public and private agencies for his consideration. The board's chairman, Mr. Frederic Delano, pledged to keep the Chief of Staff of the Army, Mr. Henry Stimpson, informed of civilian post-war plans, and asked that Mr. Stimpson do the same of military planning. This letter, signed October 23, 1942, initiated demobilization planning within a year of Pearl Harbor and almost three years before Japan would surrender.<sup>22</sup> The Army was off to a much earlier start than in WWI.

In his response, Mr. Stimpson explained Gen George Marshall, Chief of Staff of the Army, had recalled to active duty Retired Brig Gen John Palmer in November 1941 to "have in case he was needed," and later to lead an advisory board of officers in June 1942 to plan for the post-war military.<sup>23</sup> Brigadier General Palmer believed General Marshall wanted him "because he knew that I had given many years of study to the evolution of the politico-military institutions of the United States and he therefore hoped I might be able to contribute to the formation of a peace establishment consistent with American tradition, one which might be expected to receive the continued support of the American people and their Congress."<sup>24</sup> General Palmer quickly advised General Marshall "that one of the main causes of delay in orderly demobilization

---

<sup>22</sup> Letter, Frederic A. Delano, Chairman NRPB, to Sec of War, 23 Oct 1942 in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 29-30.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 30; Michael S Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-45* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 1.

<sup>24</sup> Memo, Gen Palmer for Committee on Civilian Components, 9 Jan 48, sub: Inter-relations between Professional and Non-Professional Personnel in the Armed Forces of a Democratic State, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 30.

after WWI was a lack of early planning.”<sup>25</sup> Based on this advice, General Marshall directed demobilization planning start as early as possible.

During the first quarter of 1943, the Army Service Forces (ASF), the Army Ground forces (AGF), and the Army Air Forces (AAF) had each begun work on demobilization planning. Each branch, through its own unique perspective, studied differing demobilization plans and their associated effects on the Army. The ASF examined options interpreted through the lens of a personnel specialist, the AGF through the lens of ground combat capabilities, and the AAF through the lens of airpower. Each branch was working in parallel, but not in concert with the other branches. In April 1943, General Palmer advised the Chief of Staff that a special centralized organization should be established to study the problem, research the past, and take into account the personnel and logistical aspects of demobilization. On April 14, 1943, General Marshall heeded General Palmer’s advice, directing the formation of a small group within the ASF “not involved in current operations” to “define the problem and research the past experience and mistakes of the last war.”<sup>26</sup> He emphasized the importance of secrecy and understood early talk of demobilization would be detrimental to the nation’s morale and fighting spirit. Despite this need, he also emphasized the necessity of keeping the General Staff fully informed.

Unlike Colonel Conrad’s experience of WWI, General Marshall’s directive ensured demobilization planning for WWII started early and an entire group of military planners, not a single person, would study the topic. The Army called the new organization the Project Planning Division (PPD) of the ASF, its appointed director was Brig Gen W. F. Tompkins. General Tompkins ordered an initial assessment of demobilization planning, the *Survey of Demobilization Planning*, which

---

<sup>25</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 31.

<sup>26</sup> Memo, Chief of Staff for Commanding General Army Service Forces, 14 Apr 1943, sub: Demobilization Planning, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 32.

recommended planning should continue under four general assumptions. First, the United States would emerge from WWII as the world's foremost military power and would be prepared for action in many parts of the world. Second, the war in Europe would end before the Japanese surrender. Third, The United States would furnish an important share of large-scale occupation troops. Finally, public opinion would demand a rapid demobilization.<sup>27</sup>

Under these assumptions, General Tompkins requested the Director of Personnel from ASF study and make recommendations on methods of demobilization. A committee studied the possibility of demobilization by unit, civilian skill, length of service, or some combination of those factors. Although the committee had representatives from all three branches of the Army, the AAF did not provide a formal view because Gen Henry Arnold, Commanding General of the AAF, had not officially expressed his opinion on the subject to his representatives. Gen Lesley McNair, Chief of Staff of the AGF, favored unit demobilization, claiming, "demobilization in the last war (WWI) was one of the best things done."<sup>28</sup> Recognizing that certain unforeseen demands might force the release of men in various categories, as in WWI, on July 14, 1943, the committee recommended a combination of demobilization by unit and of individual groups "which will not impair military effectiveness."<sup>29</sup> The Army kept this report in suspension pending more studies.

While the ASF worked on a method of demobilization, General Tompkins also requested Major General Handy, the Assistant Chief of staff at the Army's General Staff Operations Division (OPD), provide specific recommendations for total force strength required after cessation

---

<sup>27</sup> ASF, Project Planning Division, *Survey of Demobilization Planning*, 18 Jun 1943, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 43–44.

<sup>28</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 39.

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 40.



of hostilities in Europe. He recommended a complete force of 78 ground divisions and 260 air groups, totaling 5.3 million men. Upon first review of OPD's results, General Marshall felt Handy had settled upon an unrealistic force and directed they reduce their figures in order to meet the expected outcry for rapid demobilization. Despite General Handy's insistence that the number of air groups was predicated on the AAF becoming the nation's first line of defense and therefore needed to be kept at M-Day levels, the Chief of Staff pressed him to reduce his figures based upon purely military needs, leaving out all economic and political factors. On July 29, 1943, Handy slashed his estimates by approximately one-million men, the equivalent of 21 divisions and 30 air groups. The new recommendation was for 57 divisions and 230 air groups, a total of 4.2 million men, to provide security between victory in Europe and victory in Japan.<sup>30</sup> This was the first time military planners saw their requested force structure reduced based upon the expected demand of rapid demobilization under the guise of military necessity. It would not be the last.

During OPD's study on troop strength, General Tompkins' Project Planning Division underwent an organizational change. On July 22, 1943, Mr. Robert Patterson, the Under Secretary of War, directed OPD be removed from the command of the ASF and centralized as a part of the War Department's Special Staff within the office of the Chief of Staff of the Army. It was designated the Special Planning Division with General Tompkins to remain as the Chief. The Special Planning Division (SPD) rapidly developed liaisons with the planning elements of the Air, Ground, and Service Forces. To help solve unique problems that were peculiar to the Army Air Forces, the Chief of the AAF Special Projects Office, Col F. Trubee Davison, would also be the Deputy Director of the SPD.<sup>31</sup> In

---

<sup>30</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 40–44.

<sup>31</sup> USAF Historical Division, "A Historical Study: Redeployment and Demobilization" (Air University, June 1953), 5.

theory, the new SPD met General Marshall's intent for a centralized post-war planning organization that would be immune to the possible infighting between the separate branches.

The early start to planning allowed SPD to attack another issue identified from their historical review of WWI: separation pay. They produced a formal study and made recommendations based on its conclusions to General Marshall. Although the Chief of Staff never formally approved the proposed plan, he used it as the basis of his Congressional testimony resulting in the Mustering-Out Payment Act of 1944, which the President signed in February. The plan ensured those returning from war would be paid a monthly installment to ease their transition to civilian life. General Tompkins' planners, preventing one of the known problems WWI veterans had faced, saw this as an early victory.<sup>32</sup>

Although the Army designated the SPD as the hub of post-war planning, it struggled to gain unanimous consent from its planning partners. The SPD loomed small in both strength and status. The SPD at its height had only 20 officers in April 1944, while the OPD had more than 200. Additionally, officers from the OPD such as Dwight Eisenhower went on to high responsibility while those of the SPD typically languished in relative obscurity. This resulted in an organization that lacked imagination and the prestige required to facilitate efficient planning. Due to its placement under the special staff, the SPD relied on inputs from the ASF, the AGF, the AAF, and the OPD, but lacked the standing of the Army's general staff to garner the full support of the other branches. Furthermore, its plans now needed approval from the newly formed Joint Chiefs of Staff. This functional

---

<sup>32</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 47–52.



structure relegated the SPD to role as a coordinating agency more than an authoritative agency.<sup>33</sup>

General Marshall formally brought the Joint Chiefs into the planning cycle on July 30, 1943. He knew “at the end of the last war there was a three months delay in announcing a demobilization policy with untold effects upon morale,” and he wanted an early “approval of the basic (planning) assumptions.”<sup>34</sup> The Joint Chiefs supported the Army’s proposed planning assumptions: First, the war in the Pacific would require at least one additional year after V-E day, during which time partial demobilization would be possible. Second, the US Army would provide an estimated 400,000 troops to maintain order in Europe for up to one year. Third, demobilization discharges would be based on military requirements, physical condition, length of service, combat service, and dependency. Finally, the Army would maintain some form of universal military training in the United States. The Army now had approval at the highest level to begin a formal demobilization plan based on more than one factor.<sup>35</sup> This approval also led to a general shift in focus as the efforts of demobilization from this point forward did not focus on national security, but instead concentrated on appeasing the needs of individuals and, eventually, Congress.

The Special Planning Division had been wrestling with different criteria for the demobilization of individuals since the summer of 1943. A part of the SPD’s first draft favored controlling the rate of demobilization to safeguard against unemployment, a problem recognized from WWI. This portion of the plan came under fire from Brig Gen F.H. Osborn of the ASF, claiming demobilization on this basis would relegate the Army to a “sort of preventative Works Progress

---

<sup>33</sup> Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 12.

<sup>34</sup> Minutes, JCS 99<sup>th</sup> Meeting, 3 Aug 1943, Item 7, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 45.

<sup>35</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 42–47.

Administration.”<sup>36</sup> He further argued the policy would prevent soldiers returning home from effectively competing for jobs with civilians. General Osborn instead proposed the rate of discharge be based upon military need and availability of transport alone, with an option for remaining in the military in the event a soldier failed to secure employment. The SPD took this critique under advisement and continued to search for a fair method of individual discharge.

The SPD’s concern for a fair method was justified knowing that this policy would be subject to full publicity and debate. They realized that an unfair system could “easily lead to a catastrophic drop in morale among the men who must still face enemies in combat” and fulfill post-war occupation duties.<sup>37</sup> The quest for a fair method led the SPD to conduct surveys amongst soldiers in all theaters, seeking their views on the subject. This appears to be a first amongst post-war planning efforts, asking those most intimately affected by the policy for their personal opinion on how best to conduct demobilization.<sup>38</sup>

Men in Europe and the Southwest Pacific returned their surveys in January 1944. Soldiers preferred to first demobilize those with overseas service and with dependents.<sup>39</sup> This survey was the catalyst leading eventually to the Adjusted Service Rating Card (ASR). The final criteria used for SPD’s proposal for enlisted soldiers was based on length of service, length of time overseas, combat experience by campaign, and number of children.<sup>40</sup> The Deputy Chief of Staff approved this scheme

---

<sup>36</sup> Memo, Osborn to Tompkins, 15 Sept 1943, sub: Personnel Demobilization Regulations, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 65.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 66.

<sup>38</sup> A survey of this nature was not attempted when demobilizing after American Revolutionary War, The American Civil War, The Spanish-American War, or WWI, see Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 2–19; Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 1–7; Craven and Cate, *The AAF in WWII*, 7:545–548.

<sup>39</sup> SPD, *Progress Report*, January 1944, Note: Less than 7% of the men polled considered other factors more important, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 67.

<sup>40</sup> Memo, PSD for Chief of Staff, 17 August 1944, sub: Personnel Demobilization Plan, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 76.

on August 23, 1944. Although the Army modified the soldiers' criteria slightly, by giving each criterion a different weight, it generally granted the soldiers' desires in a progressive gambit to garner one important constituency.

The SPD's proposal for the demobilization of officers was based purely on military necessity, but the ASR card was to be used as the basis for identifying excess officers. At this point, the AAF began to rebel from the Army's plans for demobilization. On September 26, 1944, the AAF notified the SPD it would not concur with the plan for officer, warrant officers, and flight officers. Instead of using the individual considerations of the ASR system, the AAF wanted to muster out officers with low efficiency ratings using their Officer Evaluation Reports. The AAF wanted to get rid of its poorest performing officers, not those that had been around the longest and had the most combat experience. The AAF was attempting to keep those it considered most valuable to the war effort, and argued the ASR considerations best applied to enlisted members but did not apply to "officers who voluntarily accepted responsibility beyond that of a Selective Service philosophy."<sup>41</sup>

The Army's Personnel Division of its General Staff (G-1) strongly disagreed with the AAF's viewpoint. It believed that the policy did take into account the needs of the Army for its continued war with Japan, and that the Army needed to enforce a standardized system across the entire service, a system that ensured the release of those who most deserved it. They claimed the AAF plan was open to many errors of human judgment, while the AAF believed their system allowed for the benefits of human judgment. Despite the objections of the G-1, on April 25, 1945, General Marshall sided with the AAF and eliminated the use of a critical ASR

---

<sup>41</sup> AAF Memo to SPD, 8 December 1944, sub: RR1-5, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 79.

score for officers claiming it “desirable not to inhibit or make difficult the release of the least effective officers.”<sup>42</sup>

While the branches of the Army grappled over methods of individual demobilization, another saga unfolded between the AAF and the Army over the specific number of troops required to finish the war and provide for post-war security needs, which included European occupation duty, Pacific occupation duty, and providing forces for a coalition policing force. As previously mentioned, by October 1943, General Marshall approved preliminary planning figures to provide security between V - E Day and V-J (Period I) Day of 57 divisions of ground troops and 230 air groups totaling a strength of 5.6 million men. This same proposal included figures to provide security for the six months following V-J day (Period II) of 28 divisions and 105 air groups totaling approximately 2.5 million men.<sup>43</sup> Between October 1943 and April 1944 the SPD’s planning efforts were stalled waiting for approval of Army planning figures by the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS). Without approval of the foundational figures on which to plan demobilization, their efforts were dead in the water.

After much haggling between the SPD, the Army General Staff’s G-3 Division—which felt it had been completely cut out of the first iteration of post V-E day troop planning—and the OPD, the JCS produced Plan 521/5. This plan determined an Army strength of 7.7 million men following the defeat of Germany. This figure assumed that V-E day would be July 1, 1944, but remained constant for the dates of October 1944 and June 1945. The SPD realized the implication was that little demobilization would take place between V-E day and the assumed V-J day one year later.

---

<sup>42</sup> D/F SPD to C/S, 25 April 1945, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 80.

<sup>43</sup> Memo, SPD Branch Chiefs, 1 October 1944, sub: Emergency Interim Forces, SPD Study #33, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 55.

With a total planning figure approved for Period I, General Tompkins and the SPD began planning a provisional troop basis for the post-war military establishment. In concert with the OPD and inputs from the ASF, the AAF, and the AGF, they established two assumptions. First, the Regular Army would consist of 1.7 million men, 1.1 million would be regular troops, and 630,000 would be trainees under universal military training (UMT). Second, the Active Reserve would have a strength of 3 million. With these figures, the War Department Budget Officer estimated the annual cost of the post-war military, and the SPD proudly finished a plan for the Post-War Troop Basis on 19 August 1944.<sup>44</sup>

The Post-War Troop basis did not survive first contact with General Marshall. He called the plan “so unrealistic—or rather improbable of accomplishment, however desirable . . . it would do great harm to the entire . . . post-war program . . . if any rumor of such conception were to get abroad.”<sup>45</sup> He foresaw the annual cost of a large Army as completely excessive.<sup>46</sup> Maj Gen Ray Porter, Assistant Chief of Staff G-3, advised General Marshall, claiming “if the estimates given should ever be made public,...our people would be frightened into a state of violent opposition to all War Department recommendations for the postwar military establishment.”<sup>47</sup> The Chief of Staff believed the planner’s vision was clouded by the current level of appropriations, and they did not adequately take into account the expected weakened condition of defeated Axis powers or the expected benefits gained from a program of

---

<sup>44</sup> Memo, SPD for G-3, 5 Sep 1944, sub: Post-War Deployments, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 60; and “War Department Post-War Troop Basis,” 19 Aug 1944, in Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 108.

<sup>45</sup> Memo, Marshall for Acting Director, SPD, 13 November 1944, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 61.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1907-1960*, vol. 1 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989), 203.

<sup>47</sup> Memo, Porter to Deputy Chief of Staff, 12 November 1944, quoted in Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 102.

UMT. General Marshall had once again preemptively cut-back the Army's proposed strength based upon current troop morale, expected cost, and expectation of Congressional approval of a UMT program.

General Tompkins and his staff began a new Post-War Troop Basis with a drastically different outcome, specifically for the AAF. The radically revised plan presented in February 1945 cut the strength of the Army from 1.1 million troops to a meager 330,000. The AAF's strength went from 75 groups to just 16.<sup>48</sup> The General Staff, the ASF, and the AGF quickly approved this new plan. The AAF stood its ground and did not concur with the new plan, claiming it was unrealistic and unsound. The AAF thought the nation should not base the postwar size upon a guess of peacetime national budgets but instead on postwar needs and allow Congress to arrive at a budget to support the plan.<sup>49</sup> Sixteen air groups were totally inadequate for the AAF to provide a realistic M-Day striking capability. The OPD claimed it was just a planning document based on an idealistic world situation that may not occur for many years, if ever. The Deputy Chief of staff sided with the OPD and told General Arnold the plan did not apply to a period of turbulence; it was simply a realistic plan for when all hostilities had ceased.<sup>50</sup>

The war in Europe came to end on May 6, 1945, almost two years after demobilization planning had commenced. Yet, despite the Army's massive planning effort, the war in Europe had ended without a post-war plan endorsed by all three branches of the service.

### **Execution of WWII Demobilization**

News of victory in Europe galvanized decisions. The War Department's Readjustment Regulation 1-1 (RR 1-1), Plan for Readjustment of Military Personnel After the Defeat of Germany, was

---

<sup>48</sup> "War Department Post-War Troop Basis, 19 August 1944, and Memo, Tompkins to Chief of Staff, sent 25 January 1945, in Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 108.

<sup>49</sup> Herman S. Wolk, *Planning and Organizing the Post War Air Force, 1943 - 1947* (Office of Air Force History, 1984), 54.

<sup>50</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 63-64.



enacted based on the SPD's plans for Period I. This plan provided the framework for shifting forces from the European Theater to the Pacific Theater and provided for limited demobilization.

Troop movements from Europe to the Pacific created problems of its own. Just before V-E day the AAF had 200,000 men in the United States who were qualified for overseas duty but had not yet left the country. The AAF had to send these low-scoring men on the ASR scale overseas, often to Europe, to replace those with high-scores who were now eligible to return to the United States. During this time, the Army only allowed the AAF to send one-half enough inductees to fill Zone of the Interior (ZOI) operating jobs, which would lead to separation. This was a problem unique to the AAF, as the AGF and the ASF both had enough ZOI slots. Therefore, a large amount of men returning from overseas eligible for discharge were labeled as 'essential,' assigned to a base to perform menial tasks, and required to remain in the Army until they could gain a slot to the ZOI. This meant the Army retained a large number of AAF personnel at Air Force installations in non-essential jobs, leading to a drastic drop in morale and a general feeling of helplessness.<sup>51</sup>

The media was already getting wind of military problems and beginning to prey upon the military's plans and execution of demobilization. On 7 May 1945 the *Boston Post* wrote, "if this plan...were fairly administered no doubt the married men with children, who had been overseas for a long time and had excellent records in combat, would get first consideration in being discharged. The question is, however, would that plan be fairly administered?"<sup>52</sup> This article foreshadowed the problems to come for the Army.

---

<sup>51</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 135.

<sup>52</sup> The Boston Post, 7 May 1945, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 113.

By June 1945, both the executive and legislative branches of the government began to hear grumblings from within the Army. The War Manpower Commission (after receiving pressure from the railroad workers and coal miners' industrial groups), the Office of Defense Transportation, and Secretary of the Interior all attacked Mr. Stimpson over the low number of military separations occurring.<sup>53</sup> This happened despite the results of a War Department survey showing that 80% of those in the states eligible for discharge through the ASR plan thought it was fair. Unfortunately, 66% of soldiers thought the Army was executing the plan poorly, and a whopping 58% of these men were in the AAF, and only 7% of those with a delay in separation felt the service had given them an adequate reason for their delay. It was clear that the Army in general and the AAF specifically had a strategic communication problem brewing both inside and outside the service. This problem led to further tension with Congress, the media, and the public.<sup>54</sup>

In an effort to preempt internal communication issues, the SPD had planned two short films and a companion pamphlet thanking soldiers for their sacrifices in defeating Germany and explaining the details of RR 1-1. The Army sent the first film, "Two Down and One to Go," to all theatres on November 11, 1944. The planners did not complete the second film and the pamphlet until early May. Due to the defeat of Germany, the second two pieces of media did not make it to all theaters in time for the end of the war. According to a War Department survey in late May and early June 1945, over 80% of all soldiers worldwide saw the first film, and 95% thought it did a good job of explaining the plan. As a result, in late June, the SPD attempted to create a different film and pamphlet explaining the demobilization plan following the defeat of Japan. The War Department planned to show this

---

<sup>53</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 128–131.

<sup>54</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 133.



film to both service members and the public, but the SPD still operated under the assumption that it would be at least another year before V-J Day. As a result, the SPD would never get the opportunity to dispatch a film regarding the demobilization following the sudden defeat of Japan.<sup>55</sup>

In May 1945 the SPD begun work on a new demobilization plan for use following V-J day, but they were well short of an approved plan when the atomic bombs were dropped on the 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> of August. Their assumption of Japan fighting for at least one year after the defeat of Germany was wrong. The planners sent an 'emergency plan' to the Chief of Staff, who approved it for use on 13 August 1945, the day before Japan accepted the Allied terms of surrender. Fortunately, the SPD had a plan on the shelf. Unfortunately, it was essentially the same plan used for the period after the defeat of Germany, except the emphasis was on demobilization and not redeployment.<sup>56</sup> The plan was relatively short sighted, and did not take into account the political or international context of the time.

President Truman advised the House Military Affairs Committee in August 1945 that a large post-war Army was essential to the security of the United States. Generals Eisenhower and MacArthur estimated well over 1.2 million troops would be required to meet the nation's needs. The SPD's plans of 2.5 million men for use following V-J Day was presented to the House Military Affairs Committee as "the lowest strength we can attain by" June 1946.<sup>57</sup> The President did not object to this figure, so the Army assumed it had won Presidential support for a large peacetime Army, one that was essential to the future security of the United States. Therefore, unless Congress directed the formation of a large Regular Army after the war, demobilization would have to be a

---

<sup>55</sup> Surveys conducted in May and June 1945, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 125.

<sup>56</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 84–93.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 141.

slower process than estimated and desired by the American people. The Army was advocating for two related positions that the American public was not prepared to support: a demobilization slower in pace and smaller in scale than desired.

At the end of August 1945, the Army had over of 8 million men in the service, most of whom were draftees regarded as temporary. Immediately before the surrender of Japan, the *Regular Army* consisted of less than 16,000 men including ground, air, and service forces.<sup>58</sup> As soon as Japan surrendered, pressures to demobilize quickly mounted both from within the Army and from external sources. The Deputy Chief of Staff pointed out to his General Council that “the chief difficulty now is the operation of the system [of demobilization] in the field...it does the Army little good to emphasize that we are discharging over 100,000 a week if individual commanders retain men who are no longer needed or in any way delay their separation...last week Congressmen had a backlog of some 80,000 letters from individuals and were receiving thousands more each day on the subject.”<sup>59</sup> The public forced Congressional representatives to initiate inquiries to the expediency of demobilization. This tended to deemphasize the international commitments made by the President and the accompanying endorsement of a large peacetime military, and shift focus to the details of bringing the troops home. Representative Daniel Reed from New York led the charge, claiming troops “have fought the Great War and have won it, and they cannot just understand why they are being held in remote corners of the world.”<sup>60</sup> Congress had given its support to the war for years, but was now moving to support its constituents.

---

<sup>58</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 139.

<sup>59</sup> WD General Council Minutes, 17 Sep 1945, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 142.

<sup>60</sup> Congressional Records quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 145.

It did not help when on September 15, 1945, General MacArthur claimed that he needed just 200,000 men for occupation duties in the Far East. At a time when other military leaders were trying to convince Congress of the need for a 2.5 million-man standing Army, this announcement not only conflicted with but also embarrassed the Army and fueled another round of critiques from Congress. Representative Robert Corbett from Pennsylvania immediately pounced on the inconsistencies, claiming the Army could speed up demobilization, and “to think otherwise would be to ignore their recent efficiency records.”<sup>61</sup>

While the Army Ground Forces had been able to discharge some soldiers between V-E Day and V-J Day, the AAF focused on redeploying the majority of its airmen to the Pacific. This meant the AAF had a higher proportion of its worldwide strength in the United States than either the Army or the Navy when V-J day arrived. As a result, the AAF found it desirable to establish its own separation centers to expedite the separation of its personnel. The War Department granted authority on September 1, 1945, and the bases were quickly set up.<sup>62</sup>

The limited amount of shipping capability for transporting those overseas who were eligible for discharge back to the United States created another dilemma for the AAF. Due to immense public pressure, the War Department granted permission to discharge those who were already in the United States, even though they were not qualified for discharge under the Adjusted Service Rating system’s critical score of 85 at that time. The release of some Air Forces personnel based on nonstandardized criteria caused severe morale problems. There was also a general lack of widespread information on AAF guidelines amongst both service members and the public. “One great fault of the entire demobilization program was that no individual...had any definite

---

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 145–147.

<sup>62</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 7.

knowledge of his approximate date of release.”<sup>63</sup> Between September 3 and December 19, the War Department made four different announcements to the service, Congress, and the public as it reduced the critical ASR score. Despite their best efforts, the Army’s internal mechanisms for communication and tracking of personnel had broken down. Service members found themselves trapped overseas awaiting transport due to a quota system, or sitting in a stateside disposition center awaiting release. Even those who met the critical ASR score could not accurately predict when they would be free from the confines of their mandatory service.

By the end of 1945, the Army had discharged over four million soldiers since V-J Day, and found its total strength inadequate for the required occupation duties overseas. The Army simply could not gain enough enlistees or selective service inductees to stem the tide of demobilization.<sup>64</sup> As a result, on January 4, 1946, the War Department announced it was necessary to slow demobilization. This not only resulted in more pointed criticism from Congress, but also between 10,000 and 20,000 soldiers in Manila held public demonstrations over the War Department’s conflicting statements and called for Congress to place additional pressure on the Army.<sup>65</sup> On January 8, President Truman tried to defend the War Department’s plan, highlighting the “enormous size of the task” and pleading that “the wonder is not that some of our soldiers, sailors and marines are not yet home but that so many are already back at their own firesides.”<sup>66</sup>

---

<sup>63</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 7, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Between Sept and the end of December 1945 there were only 539,348 enlisted additions to the Army, Table 6, in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 250.

<sup>65</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 161–164.

<sup>66</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Statement by the President on Demobilization” (Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, January 8, 1946), Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1450>.

On January 15, 1946, the War Department released a statement of policy governing demobilization through June; the AAF published a schedule showing when every enlisted person could expect to become eligible for separation. This greatly reduced the fog and morale problems created from the lack of information regarding demobilization.<sup>67</sup> Despite this, on January 23, a Senate demobilization inquiry insisted the Army was capable of a faster rate of discharge and warned against a “draft Army” in peacetime. They claimed the Army now had a surplus of 2 million men.<sup>68</sup> This back-and-forth rhetoric between the War Department and Congress continued through various surges until the Army officially completed demobilization in June 1947.

The AAF was at peak strength in March 1944. At that time, it had 2.4 million members, consisting of 307,000 officers and 2.1 million enlisted personnel. As of V - J Day, the Army had a total of 8.0 million men and the AAF had 2.2 million personnel, those figures began to decrease rapidly. By December, the Army was down to 4.2 million men and the AAF was under 1 million. In a touch over four months, the nation cut both the Army and AAF personnel in half, while it reduced the AAF from 218 groups to 109. By the end of June 1946, the AAF consisted of less than 500,000 airmen, and totaled 54 groups, meaning that it had been cut in half again. The entire Army was down to 925,000 people when demobilization ended in June 1947. The Air Forces hit the low point in May 1947, as the total strength fell to 303,614 personnel.<sup>69</sup>

The execution of the Army’s demobilization was plagued from the unanticipated early capitulation of Japan. The emergency plan did not contain the levels of detail provided in the plan for redeployment after V-E day. The American people and drafted soldiers teamed up to mobilize

---

<sup>67</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 354.

<sup>69</sup> Craven and Cate, *The AAF in WWII*, 7:566–569; Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 265.

Congress, which pressured and scrutinized the War Department's every action. The plans did not adequately account for the limitations of the shipping community. The limitations of internal communication within Army also led to further Congressional intervention. Despite the best efforts to learn from WWI and plan early for demobilization, the Army ultimately became submissive to the pressures of civilian authority. These conditions created a completely hollow AAF on the eve of its independence.

### **Effects of Demobilization**

The effect of demobilization was not in proportion to the reduction in total strength. A demobilization plan based on personal fairness led to the separation of the more experienced and expert operators. Each unit essentially paid the toll of demobilization twice, once in numerical reduction and once in the reduction of expertise. The result was a greater potential decrease in national security.

Commanders in the field, especially those of the AAF, where the technical nature of their tasks were highly dependent on extensive training and experience, felt this deficiency first. On October 15, 1945, the JCS tasked the Joint Staff Planners to prepare an estimate of military capabilities at that time and at the end of the 1946 fiscal year. The Commanding Generals of Army Forces in the Pacific and in Europe assisted the planners by submitting their estimates to the War Department. General Eisenhower, the European Commander, estimated that in an offensive his troops, both ground and air, "could operate in an emergency for a limited period at something less than 50% normal wartime efficiency."<sup>70</sup> General MacArthur estimated the supporting air elements of the Pacific forces "could operate at something less than 50%

---

<sup>70</sup> Memo, JEH (Hull) for C/S, 21 Nov 45, sub: Combat Efficiency, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 266.



efficiency.”<sup>71</sup> A later estimate in September of 1946 based on data provided by General MacArthur and his subordinate commanders estimated the combat effectiveness of both ground and air Army units at approximately 25%.<sup>72</sup> By the end of 1946, “the Air Force had been reduced to 55 groups, and operational efficiency reports were disturbing: only two groups were effective.”<sup>73</sup> “By June 30, 1947, the Air Force had 11 effective groups, and the reactivation of 15 groups brought the total to 70, although many existed in little more tangible form than a headquarters record.”<sup>74</sup> Demobilization reduced the effectiveness of the AAF far more than the numerical record indicated. The air arm was, in fact, little more than a Potemkin village.

General Arnold recognized there were three major problem areas resulting from demobilization: flying safety, training, and maintenance. He delegated these problems to his deputy, Lt Gen Ira C. Eaker, saying: “I am also very disturbed over the trend we are now following in connection with demobilization . . . one thing I am certain is that we should do some very, very careful planning and extensive thinking about this whole matter, not only maintenance but also other phases of it, in order to secure a satisfactory solution with the least delay.”<sup>75</sup> It was clear to Arnold that as a highly technical service, the drastic loss of experience was going to affect the Air Force disproportionately in relation to the other services.

The problems with training and safety were intertwined with the loss of experience in the AAF. In order to fill the training gap between those leaving the service and those entering, the AAF reduced basic

---

<sup>71</sup> Memo, JEH (Hull) for C/S, 21 Nov 45, sub: Combat Efficiency, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 266.

<sup>72</sup> P&O file ABC 320.2 (3-13-43) TAB 521/23 in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 267.

<sup>73</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 13.

<sup>74</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 13.

<sup>75</sup> RRS, Arnold to Eaker, sub: Demobilization Trend in Connection with Discharges of Maintenance Personnel, 9 Oct 45, quoted in Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 269.

training from thirteen to eight weeks in January 1946.<sup>76</sup> The entrance requirements were also relaxed, decreasing the quality of the trainees entering the service. For example, Strategic Air Command (SAC) only wanted to give technical training to airmen with an Army General Comprehensive Test (AGCT) score of 100 or more, but the low levels of manning forced them to lower the prerequisite score to 85. In reality, SAC accepted airmen with scores below 85, and some even below 60.<sup>77</sup> The AAF also could not retain its experienced instructors; therefore, more inexperienced recent graduates of the AAF training command had to be used in their places. Rated personnel with no experience teaching basic training found themselves leading classes they were barely qualified to teach. Despite the dominating percentage of rated personnel in the AAF at the time, graduates of flying training courses decreased from a monthly average of 19,144 during the first eight months of 1945 to an average of 513 after V-J day. This only produced 15 percent of the requirements of a 70-group Air Force. The AAF had needed and had had wartime expertise more thoroughly integrated through its ranks than the other services, but once it lost that experience the lack of output capability in the training programs created a shortage of trained pilots, navigators, bombardiers, gunners, and radar observers that would exist for years after the end of WWII.<sup>78</sup>

Throughout the process of demobilization, the AAF had been shaping the composition of the force to include a larger percentage of officers and operators, creating a crisis within the maintenance career field as well. For example, “between January 1945 and October 1946 the percentage of experienced mechanics in the AAF dropped by 91

---

<sup>76</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 11.

<sup>77</sup> Harry Borowski, *A Hollow Threat: Strategic Air Power and Containment before Korea* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 44.

<sup>78</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 11, 61.



percent.”<sup>79</sup> This created a situation where “airplanes were stranded in all parts of the globe for lack of maintenance personnel to repair them. Serviceable and even new aircraft, equipment, and materiel were left to deteriorate for lack of personnel to prepare them for storage.”<sup>80</sup> Between January 1945 and October 1946 aircraft readiness dropped from 54 to 18 percent, and trained maintenance personnel declined to eight percent of their earlier number.<sup>81</sup>

The AAF also lost a tremendous materiel capability at the end of the war. The AAF had neither the personnel nor the capability to maintain and bring all the aircraft home. The United States sold many of its weapons, and its aircraft and parts, to the British, French, and Italian governments. Aircraft that cost \$120,000 to manufacture were sold for under \$20,000 each, suggesting a phenomenal loss of capital. Additionally, more than 15,000 aircraft were put into long-term storage in the United States, and many of these aircraft were lost due to poor storage methods and locations.<sup>82</sup>

Gen Carl Spaatz, in a report to the Secretary of the Air Force dated June 30, 1948, summed the results of the rapid demobilization: “Such drastic reductions had been accomplished that overseas commanders had insufficient personnel to carry out the responsibilities assigned by the Joint Chiefs of Staff.”<sup>83</sup> This was expressed when “Jonathan Wainwright, commanding general of the Fourth Army and a personal friend of the AAF’s commanding general, asked the AAF for three C-47 aircraft to support his staff. Spaatz declined, stating that he had too few maintenance personnel who were mostly ‘new, untrained recruits’ to

---

<sup>79</sup> AAF Ltr 35-33, Jul 12, 1946, “AAF Recruiting Policies,” quoted in Mark Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force: Air Force Enlisted Personnel Policy, 1907-1956* (Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997), 89.

<sup>80</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 13.

<sup>82</sup> Craven and Cate, *The AAF in WWII*, 7:571.

<sup>83</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 7.

repair them. 'We have whole squadrons,' Spaatz wrote, 'with less than ten mechanics.'"<sup>84</sup>

### **Summary**

Between 1943 and 1947, the Army planned for and then demobilized on a scale never seen before in the United States. The plan attempted to solve problems identified in the study of WWI demobilization. The plan prioritized personal fairness over national security by discharging individuals over entire units in an effort to quench the thirst of the American public to 'bring the troops home.' Unfortunately, this resulted in a severe reduction in combat effectiveness as hardened experience was rapidly stripped away from units. The method of demobilizing entire units, such as used in WWI, may have been more favorable to the overall combat effectiveness following WWII.<sup>85</sup>

Throughout the process, there was a general lack of linkage between national objectives and the process of demobilization. General Marshall and President Truman were preoccupied with the force strength they foresaw Congress and the American people tolerating, rather than strongly advocating for a post-WWII military based upon assumptions of the expected new world order following the defeat of Japan. Generals Arnold and Spaatz saw the actions of Marshall and Truman. They correctly diagnosed demobilization and the corresponding resource constraints as major obstacles to the future of national security. They also noted General Marshall's lack of focus on the changing international power structure. Arnold and Spaatz later used this to their advantage when they formulated a guiding policy for the future of the United States air-arm, which this thesis will explore in the next chapter.

---

<sup>84</sup> Ltr, CG, AAF (Spaatz), to CG, Fourth Army (Wainwright), Feb 15, 1946, Spaatz Collection Diaries, Box 25, LC, quoted in Grandstaff, *Foundation of the Force*, 89.

<sup>85</sup> Col Edwin Miller, "The USAF Replacement System for Airmen" (Air War College, Air University, February 1949), 53.

The Army began its planning efforts early, but was plagued by organizational inefficiencies. The War Department did not give General Tompkins and the SPD the organizational placement required to garner the prestige and power required to settle disputes between the Army General Staff and the three competing branches.

The Army also suffered from a general lack of strategic narrative both internally and between the War Department and Congressional leaders. The necessity for determining a plan early and clearly communicating it both internally and externally was driven home when the lack of such communications resulted in undesirable external inquiries from Congress and the media.

Demobilization decimated the Army. On May 12, 1945, the Army consisted of 8.3 Million men. By June 30, 1946, the Army could muster 925,000 troops.<sup>86</sup> The legacy of WWII demobilization on the AAF is seen best through the statistics presented by General Spaatz in his first report to the Secretary of the Air Force. The Army Air Forces' 218 combat effective groups and 414,000 aircrew in August 1945 had been reduced to a meek 52 groups, 41 of which were combat *ineffective*, totaling only 24,079 aircrew.<sup>87</sup> This was the sword General Spaatz and his successors would have to wield against an uncertain foe as the vanguard of American national defense, and the most critical obstacle to an effective Air Force strategy. Although the scale of demobilization after WWII was unique, the idea of a post-war military drawdown and its accompanying resource constraints resonate with today's Air Force following wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

---

<sup>86</sup> Sparrow, *History of Demobilization*, 265.

<sup>87</sup> Spaatz, *Report of the CSAF to SECAF*, 13.

## **Chapter 2: Guiding Policy—Creation of the US Air Force**

All services and every combat arm experienced drastic demobilization and resource constraints after World War II. Only the air arm, however, did so amid the imperative to also stand up as an independent service. Air Force leaders saw this period as a window of opportunity during which it could carve out negotiation space for its own interests. Between WWII and the Korean War, numerous external and internal challenges confronted the budding air arm. Externally, it squabbled with the Army, Navy, and Congress, often fighting sometime allies in its quest for organizational independence. Internally, it battled waves of personnel issues, trying to develop an organizational structure not only uniquely air-minded but also capable of standing on its own feet free of institutional support from the Army.

Generals Arnold and Spaatz were crucial to the creation of an independent Air Force focused on independent strategic bombing, setting this goal as its guiding policy. General Arnold argued against the Air Force's critics, emphasizing the Air Force as an economical solution to the changing international power structure. Arnold also struck a mutually beneficial deal with the Army, proposed a method of defense unification, and created forward-looking internal planning mechanisms. General Spaatz carried the torch General Arnold handed him by continuing each of these efforts. On March 12, 1946, General Spaatz published a guiding policy of his own for the building of a peacetime air force, asking airmen to focus upon, among other things, the creation of an autonomous Air Force in a unified military establishment, the reorganization the Air Force by commands, and the maintenance of an

Air Force in-being.<sup>1</sup> These three points sharpened ongoing efforts to build an independent service in the face of many challengers.

### **External Challenges**

When the Army began its planning for demobilization following WWII, the AAF saw an opportunity to begin planning for its post-war independence. The Army's intent was to dismantle itself in as fair a manner as possible, while the AAF focused upon independence, which required retaining as many well trained personnel and as much materiel as it could.

The AAF quickly realized it needed its own planning organization to advocate adequately for its long-term goals. Following the Casablanca conference in January 1943, General Arnold recognized the AAF was ill equipped for long term planning, especially in light of British acumen and recent State Department queries regarding post-war plans that had left the Army Air Forces flat-footed. In April 1943, he created a Special Projects Office (SPO) and the Post War Division (PWD) within the air staff. The SPO was primarily responsible for planning the demobilization of the AAF in conjunction with General Tompkins from the War Department's SPD. This left the AAF's PWD as the primary office responsible for the postwar plans concerning the size and composition of a peacetime Air Force.<sup>2</sup> Splitting these tasks was necessary for the AAF to ensure its planners could adequately focus on creating an efficient and independent service. In contrast, the War Department's SPD had to accomplish planning and executing demobilization as well as planning for the future needs of the Army. When the execution of demobilization ran into trouble, the War Department's SPD struggled to accomplish both tasks, and its planning efforts for the future suffered.

---

<sup>1</sup> Carl Spaatz, *Report of the Chief of Staff United States Air Force to the Secretary of the Air Force* (Washington DC: Department of the Air Force, June 30, 1948), 3.

<sup>2</sup> Perry M Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace, 1943-1945*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 5-11.

The AAF's postwar planning activities were coordinated by two men. Col Reuben Moffat, an enlisted aviator in WWI and a graduate of the Air Corps Tactical School (ACTS), ran the AAF's PWD. An injury early in WWII grounded him from flying, but his war experience made him a prime candidate to be a lead military planner. His staff consisted of individuals with no operational experience due to the unattractive nature of planning for postwar activities in the midst of a global war. Colonel Moffat worked for Maj Gen Laurence Kuter, the Assistant Chief of Air Staff Plans. General Kuter graduated near the top of his West Point class in 1927 and, later as a lieutenant, was the top graduate of ACTS in a class full of captains and majors. He was obviously very sharp and so he stayed on as an instructor at ACTS, shaping his view of airpower, and leading to his personal view that most Army officers were against the AAF becoming an independent service. General Kuter would spend most of his career fighting against Army officers, sometimes even those who were sympathetic toward an independent air force. Sometimes, he focused more time and energy on fighting the Army than he did fighting the Navy, arguably the bigger threat, especially since General Marshall was in favor of an independent air force. Major General Kuter and Colonel Moffat became the primary military leaders outside General Arnold responsible for the majority of the AAF postwar planning.<sup>3</sup>

Although the War Department and the lead AAF planners both had the nation's security interests in mind, General Marshall's desires for a small standing AGF applied to the AAF as well, since the two organizations still fell under one department. On October 28, 1943, Maj Gen Thomas Handy, from the War Department Operations Division, stated in a planning paper "The primary function of the armed forces is, when called upon to do so, to support and, within the sphere of military effort, to enforce the national policy of the nation." For him, there must

---

<sup>3</sup> Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 6–10.

be a “complete correlation of national policy and military policy.”<sup>4</sup> General Marshall agreed and endorsed General Handy’s paper, then furthered a sentiment that General Handy proposed—the nation needed a force in being, not a potential one. Despite his support for a force in being, General Marshall did not approve of a large standing Army, citing its cost and the repugnant attitude of the American people towards standing Armies in times of peace. His solution was Universal Military Training (UMT), a program that provided the nation a large reserve force to compliment a small professional Army. This created a tension between Marshall’s UMT solution, and General Arnold’s independent Air Force solution, both focused on economically providing national security. Theoretically, Marshall’s concept harmonized with the rapid combat capability of a well-sized Air Force, and at first, Marshall placed more faith in combat-ready airpower than a large ground Army. He saw airpower as “the quickest remedy” to international disorder, but he also underestimated the required size for an Air Force to accomplish that mission.<sup>5</sup> Seizing upon General Marshall’s sentiment, Maj Gen Barney Giles, chief of AAF Air Staff, directed on December 11, 1943, that the foundation of planning the postwar air force was to create an autonomous force. He directed the Air Force to be an “M-day force, instantly ready to repel attack or to quash any incipient threat to world peace.”<sup>6</sup> The small standing Army and large Air Force combination never meshed though; instead, the frugal natured arguments for UMT poisoned the budgetary well from which the Air Force desperately needed to drink. The creation of a large standing postwar force was the key to independence for airmen, and General Marshall’s UMT stood in their way.

---

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1907-1960*, vol. 1 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989), 201.

<sup>5</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:202.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:202.



## **General Marshall and Universal Military Training**

General Marshall's visceral WWI demobilization experience caused him to prioritize the post-WWII domestic desires of the American public more than the international community's security demands. His thoughts, combined with his staff's lack of analyzing the United States' potential global security challenges, led to force structure proposals based on perceived domestic desires for a small peacetime military. UMT became his top priority program, and the basis of all other military planning between 1943 and 1945.<sup>7</sup> The UMT program was the bedrock and guiding policy of all Army plans in Marshall's eyes, because without it, there was no way to limit the size of the standing peacetime Army.

General Marshall saw UMT as a way to secure the nation while pacifying the public demand for a small peacetime Army. UMT called for all draft age men who did not serve in the military to undergo a period of military training; he felt it should be one year in length. After mandatory training, they would go back to their civilian pursuits, but were available for national service if required. The goal of the program was to create a pool of trained citizens available for relatively quick mobilization. If approved, UMT allowed the nation to keep a relatively small standing Army during peacetime, but also provided the ability to mobilize rapidly a large amount of soldiers in a time of desperation. This meant UMT would save money and meet the desire of Presidents Roosevelt and Truman, as well as Congressional desires to limit defense spending, while also meeting the demands of National Defense.

The potential enactment of UMT was a threat to a large air force, and a large air force was a prerequisite for its independence. Therefore, General Arnold and other AAF leaders attacked UMT on several fronts, in order to further their own guiding policy, an independent Air Force.

---

<sup>7</sup> Vance Mitchell, *Air Force Officers: Personnel Policy Development, 1944-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996), 13.

First, Arnold believed the AAF needed to field a large force capable of defending the nation by deterring its enemies. The 16-group force the AAF would gain under General Marshall's UMT scheme was too small to accomplish that task. Second, the UMT program assumed trainees would only receive one year of training, and the nation would have a full year warning prior to any hostilities, allowing the nation time to mobilize troops. Arnold disagreed with both assumptions: one year was not enough time to train war-ready airmen due to the extremely technical nature of their jobs, and the United States may well not have a full year warning before fighting began. The technological leap warfare had taken during WWII rendered this assumption inconceivable. General Arnold saw the next war as starting "without warning with thousands of pilotless 'things' suddenly raining destruction over Washington and other prime targets in the United States."<sup>8</sup> While this vision may have been a little ahead of its time, his point that the tyranny of distance created by the oceans on America's left and right flank would no longer protect it from the rapidly expanding legs of aeronautical technology was well taken. The Chief of the AAF successfully portrayed each argument in the context of strategic threats, evoking an emotional response from most Americans. In contrast, General Marshall's view reflected more mundane domestic political and economic considerations, making it tough for him to unite a large and passionate support base.<sup>9</sup>

As the AGF and the AAF squabbled within the War Department, the Navy announced its postwar plans. In May 1945, the Navy had publicly stated its minimum acceptable number of postwar sailors was 660,000 while the Army's UMT plan allocated only 330,000 regular troops. The Army would have an additional 630,000 troops in the UMT training program, but they would only be in the service during their one-

---

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:205.

<sup>9</sup> Michael S Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-45* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 109-118.

year training period. General Arnold and his staff thought the Navy's plans threatened to steal a larger portion of the nation's defense budget than it had in the past. To AAF leaders, those funds were the future Air Force's budget share. General Marshall disagreed with AAF leaders and continued to push for UMT and a small standing military rather than fight against the Navy.

General Marshall's staff, with the backing of the AAF staff, also saw the Navy's plan as a direct threat to the future of the Army's funding. If future funding was to be proportional to the size of each service, the Army was in trouble. In response, Marshall's staff internally proposed a postwar size of over 770,000 regular troops. Marshall was appalled by his staff, and much to their dismay, he continued to press them for a smaller plan. By early November 1945, General Marshall's simple and fiscally responsible arguments were consistently drowned out by General Arnold's melodramatic appeals to national security. Even General Marshall's staff continued to push him toward a larger service and to fight against the Navy for a larger portion of the budget. General Arnold later admitted that despite his rhetoric, his 70-group plan was not based on strategic considerations, but was rather a tool to help defeat UMT. General Arnold's arguments helped drown the UMT argument, but it took more than just his voice to rid the War Department of UMT completely.<sup>10</sup>

UMT did not disappear as planning philosophy until General Eisenhower took over as the Army Chief of Staff on November 19, 1945. By the beginning of December, Eisenhower made it known that even a force of 562,700, the latest planning estimate, was "generally inadequate"

---

<sup>10</sup> General Arnold later wrote, "Who knows whether 70 groups of air planes is the right or wrong number to prevent another war? Was not that number selected in relation to costs and expenditures, rather than with regard to the composition and strength necessary to our armed forces in the world picture?" In Henry H Arnold, *Global Mission* (New York: Hutchinson & Company, 1951), 614-615.

to provide for both the AAF and AGF.<sup>11</sup> He advocated for a force in being, questioned the utility of UMT, and approved the AAF's 70-group plan. This change in policy reflected an agreement reached between General Eisenhower and General Arnold. They agreed that if the Air Force did not abandon tactical support of the Army, the Army would back the AAF's move for organizational independence. General Eisenhower and his staff also decided to present separate postwar plans for the AGF and the AAF, "thereby strengthening our position vis-a-vis the Navy, particularly its air and Marine Corps plans."<sup>12</sup> In a swift turn of events, the new Chief of Staff encouraged his staff's desire for a large peacetime air force, invited them to compete with the Navy for resources, and moderated the previous emphasis on fiscal considerations. General Arnold's fighting spirit and General Eisenhower's contrasting attitude from General Marshall's were both crucial to the future success of the USAF and the death of UMT.

### **Creating a Force in Being**

To fulfill General Giles' desire for all postwar plans to focus on attaining an independent Air Force, the Air Staff planners developed five different force structure plans between 1944 and 1945. Each plan was based on different assumptions and different threats to the large independent air force they desired. These plans all faced intense scrutiny from General Marshall and his UMT passion.

The first plan, titled *The Initial Postwar Air Force*, was described in Chapter 1. This plan called for 105 groups and one million airmen on active duty. The planners based this version on an assumed foreign policy where the "United States, England, Russia, and China" had allied themselves at the conclusion of WWII for the "protection of mutual interests through the world, and in order to preserve peace."<sup>13</sup> The plan

---

<sup>11</sup> Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 228.

<sup>12</sup> Quoted in Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 228.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 56.

incorporated one of the lessons becoming clear during WWII, and included 45 fighter groups and 42 bomber groups, on the assumption that the bombers needed escort aircraft to reach their targets against a well-defended enemy. This plan also highlighted the limits of air force thinking at the time: Colonel Moffat thought *all* aircraft belonged in the United States Air Force (USAF), not the Navy or Marine Corps, and therefore the other services would only play defensive roles in future wars, justifying an extremely large air force. Ultimately, this plan was not based on detailed postwar international contingencies; 105 groups was just a large number supported by a fair amount of high-level War Department officials, and that seemed to provide forces for the AAF to remain powerful 'enough'. The planners completed the final version of the 105-group plan on February 14, 1944.<sup>14</sup>

On May 23, 1944, General Kuter asked Colonel Moffat to construct a second plan assuming that an effective international peacekeeping force would exist after the end of the war, allowing for a smaller USAF. The concept of having two plans worked to the advantage of AAF planners in two ways. First, the smaller plan was more palatable for Congress and General Marshall, but if the international force never came to fruition, the AAF could effectively defend its 105-group plan from General Marshall. Second, the 105-group plan was only intended to be an interim plan that applied from V - J Day forward for three years. Therefore, they could implement this second plan as the final version of a postwar plan three years after V-J Day emerged. The planners also carefully crafted the language defining an *effective* international force such that it would likely never occur. The planning staff completed this second plan on July 14, 1944, and in its final version it consisted of 75 groups and 685,000 men. The 75-group plan revealed the AAF's continued opposition to personnel restrictions set by the Army, as well as

---

<sup>14</sup> Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 56–62.

its desire to appear as if it was obeying the planning guidelines of the War Department, while simply working around them. The PWD completed this plan weeks before the War Department's SPD asked for a second plan based on an international police force, showing how far ahead of the Army planning staff the AAF planners were.<sup>15</sup>

The two-plan mentality highlights the AAF's perspective on the role of military planners versus the role of Congress and the citizens of the United States. The AAF planners clearly believed they should determine the minimum force structure required for national defense, while Congress and the people should determine what the nation could afford. General Marshall clearly did not agree with the AAF's perspective, and they could not understand why he purposely imposed limitations on the future size of the service based on what he believed the body politic would support. Therefore, the AAF continued to fight against General Marshall and his austerity measures, even while he supported their drive for independence. The planners also showed their inexperience by refusing to consult the other services or outside agencies to coordinate postwar plans; they preferred to plan everything within an organizational vacuum. This mentality highlighted the planners' beliefs in the ACTS doctrine of offensive strategic bombing, as well as a more general idea that an air force could defend the United States and its interests with little support from the Army or the Navy.<sup>16</sup>

During the fall of 1944, General Marshall rejected the War Department's G-3 troop basis based on expected budgetary constraints. This was the Army's plan for a one-million-man standing army, discussed in Chapter 1. This prompted a third plan for the AAF. This time, the War Department's SPD created the plan on their own. As expected, Marshall's staff created a plan that left the AAF with just 16

---

<sup>15</sup> Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 63–64.

<sup>16</sup> Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 65.



groups and 120,000 men, numbers that were completely unacceptable from the AAF perspective. The War Department's Budget office had estimated the AAF 105-group plan cost \$5 billion and its 75-group plan cost \$3 billion. In order to meet General Marshall's fiscal goals the new plan assumed a budget of just \$800 million, drastically undercutting the needs of the AAF. Not surprisingly, the AAF's PWD did not agree with the War Department's proposed 16-group plan, and started the revolt of the AAF.<sup>17</sup>

In a memorandum to General Marshall, Colonel Moffat explained the AAF could not support his plan for such a small air force, and could not support his Universal Military Training program. Colonel Moffat claimed the military should stop self-imposed limitations on troop numbers and budgets. He further argued the Army should fight against the Navy continually receiving 50% of the defense budget; it was time for the AAF and by default the War Department to get a larger share. If General Marshall really believed in airpower, Colonel Moffat felt the Army had to stop capitulating on the budget to the Navy. In his eyes, budgetary need and force strength should be related to the nation's expected enemies. Until January 14, 1945, the AAF planners had not identified enemies in their planning assumptions, nor considered the other services in their postwar plans. Now, to fight for its fair share of the budget, the AAF claimed only England will "emerge as a first-class naval power," and both Britain and Russia will "emerge as strong in airpower."<sup>18</sup> The AAF was making a case against the restraint of the Army and the claims of the Navy. Once interservice rivalry sufficiently threatened the AAF, it finally began to name potential enemies and plan against their assumed air capabilities.<sup>19</sup>

---

<sup>17</sup> Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 66–67.

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War*, 110.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 69.



In March 1945, the AAF had still only approved of two primary plans—the 105-group program limited to V - J Day plus 3 years and the 75-group plan that applied from that date forward. The third plan was the SPD's 16-group plan linked to UMT and rejected by the AAF. On May 31, 1945, AAF planners created a fourth plan, calling for 78 groups and 638,000 men. After being threatened with only 16 groups, the AAF came up with this new, slightly smaller plan intended to replace the 105-group plan. The 78-group plan met the majority of the AAF's needs and was slightly more palatable to General Marshall and Congress, but it too was rejected by the War Department.

By summer 1945, General Lauris Norstad, the assistant chief of Air Staff for Plans at AAF Headquarters, decided it would be better to approach Congress with a single plan rather than separate plans that shifted requirements based on an arbitrary date. On July 15, 1945, the SPO, not the PWD, completed the "V-J Day plan," which consisted of 70 groups. By skeletonizing the force structure, planners thought 400,000 men could just barely provide 70 groups of airpower. It was very different from the original 105-group plan, but offered a chance of gaining Congressional approval, and was simpler to understand than multiple figures that changed based on the calendar. Four hundred thousand men was based purely upon the number of volunteers the AAF anticipated it could gain and maintain from the civilian population, and the 70-group figure roughly correlated to 400,000 men, and was a simple number for Congress and the people to grasp and remember. Therefore, the AAF stopped talking about 400,000 men, and spoke only of 70 groups.

The political shrewdness of the AAF had finally shown through when they realized it was much easier for Congress to make cuts to a number like 400,000 than it was to cut from a number like 70. A loss of one or two groups would make a significant difference in the defense of the nation, and Lt Gen Ira Eaker, deputy commander of the Army Air

Forces, made sure General Marshall and Congress understood. This plan also met General Marshall's two rules: the regular military had to be voluntary, and his self-imposed budgetary restrictions could not be exceeded. On December 26, 1945, General Arnold set 70 groups as the official AAF postwar objective.<sup>20</sup>

Throughout the process of planning for a postwar air force, AAF planners kept their guiding policy in mind—gaining an independent air force. They advocated for the size and type of organization that ensured independence and could economically achieve the nation's objectives. The planners framed all necessary assumptions around strategic bombing doctrine, because any other frame supported the Army's argument to keep the air arm subservient. While the Army planners were fairly static, consistently waiting for the SPD to ask for a new postwar plan, AAF planners were constantly challenging their own assumptions and finding new ways to sell their plan. In this respect, the AAF planners were much more creative and flexible than the Army planners. Although the AAF planners claimed the Soviet Union was the next enemy, they chose the 70-group plan because it seemed most effective to fight General Marshall's UMT constraints. After two years of planning and much iteration, the 70-group plan became a solution upon which both General Marshall and Congress might agree.<sup>21</sup>

### **Internal Challenges**

In addition to the external challenges presented by General Marshall and the Navy, the AAF, in its transition to the USAF, also confronted serious internal issues. The service examined its personnel system and policies, attempting to determine the optimum composition of career specialties. Between 1945 and 1950 the experience and

---

<sup>20</sup> Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:201–204; Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 69–72.

<sup>21</sup> Smith, *Air Force Plans for Peace*, 104–116.

training requirements for officer career fields in the Air Forces was a major source of discord within the service.

At the close of WWII, the AAF officer corps was incredibly monolithic, a situation General Arnold quickly recognized as needing remedy. According to the Army Reorganization Act of 1920 and the National Defense Act of 1926, all Army Air Corps General Officers, commanders of flying units, and at least 90 percent of all other Regular officers had to be rated pilots. In other words, only ten percent of the AAF officers could be nonrated, and those officers would never achieve the rank of General. Yet, it was precisely those other career fields that the service now needed for a beloved, independent structure.<sup>22</sup> Actually, the air arm had always needed these other career specialties. In 1944, although AAF officers performed 275 different career specialties, and over 92 percent of those required technical training, only pilots had long-term leadership opportunity. At the time, a routine bombing mission required over 500 separate specialties to support it—even though only one could command it. The officer corps consisted of 3,000 regular officers, approximately 10,000 National Guard and Reserve commissioned officers, and over 360,000 temporary officers. Between 1940 and 1945, the total number of Regular officers grew from 2,042 to 3,180, but the number of nonrated officers remained stabilized at only 29 due to the wartime regular commissions being granted to West Point graduates, who all had to be pilots to enter the AAF. Rated crewmembers other than pilots (navigators and bombardiers) only rose from 38 officers to 40 during the same period.<sup>23</sup> “The officers who had made a career commitment to military service (regular officers), showed a near total lack

---

<sup>22</sup> John Shiner, *Foulois and the U.S. Army Air Corps: 1931-1935* (Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983), 17.

<sup>23</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 12.

of any expertise other than piloting.”<sup>24</sup> It was completely a pilot dominated air force.

Officers from the Army Corps, or, in a rare exception, a rated officer performing his secondary duty, accomplished all the AAF’s support jobs. Therefore, coming out of WWII, the AAF had no backbone of officers it could groom to lead the future support portion of the Air Force. By the end of 1945, support officers from the Arms and Services with the Army Air Forces (ASWAAF) had swelled to compose 13 percent of the AAF officer corps, as the legal limit of 10 percent was waived during the war. General Arnold saw trouble brewing for the future. He knew that when the AAF eventually became a separate it service, it could no longer count on the Army for its support. The ASWAAF was a vital source of expertise that rated officers lacked, and needed to be retained.

Before the end of 1944, General Arnold tried to remedy the impending problem in two ways. First, he tried to solve the quantity problem. General Arnold tried to convince the War Department to increase the size of the AAF regular officer legal limit from 3,000 to 7,000. Marshall gunned down his proposal for fear of bothering Congress with an administrative problem while the war raged. In December, Arnold attempted a different approach. In an effort to bolster the quality of the officer corps, he asked that technologically educated West Point graduates unqualified for pilot training be allowed to join the AAF. At the time, the AAF only allowed West Point graduates to remain in the service if they graduated from pilot training; if they washed-out it sent them to a different branch of the Army. Despite his forward-looking request, the War Department denied General Arnold’s new approach.<sup>25</sup>

General Arnold then turned his focus inward. He found ways to create change from within the AAF. During a meeting on January 12,

---

<sup>24</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 10–11.

1945, he offered a vision of the future: “The phase during which exclusive pilot management was essential is drawing to a close...regulations limiting the responsibilities and career possibilities of non-rated personnel must be changed. Every opportunity must be given to skills and abilities needed for a well-rounded organization if the United States is to maintain its air leadership.”<sup>26</sup> General Arnold’s vision set the tone for future internal AAF changes.

The Air Staff heeded General Arnold’s vector and began to study the AAF personnel system. By November 1945, the staff determined nonrated officers could fill 48 percent of all officer billets and could command 93 different types of units and installations. The Air Staff also determined that in order to attract and retain nonrated officers it must open Regular commissions to them, provide advancement opportunities, and grant them the right to command AAF units. In an interesting twist, the Air Staff recommended that only 30 percent of all Regular commissions be reserved for nonrated officers, far less than the 48 percent of jobs it said they were technically qualified to perform. This recommendation was an important qualification in the AAF’s acceptance of nonrated officers to the future service plans, one that General Spaatz embraced by publicly stating that 70 percent of all AAF officers should be rated even though the actual need for them in the air was lower.<sup>27</sup>

In April 1945, the Joint Chiefs of Staff concluded a yearlong study that recommended a single department of the armed forces with separate Army, Navy, and Air Forces. This move sparked General Carl Spaatz, the new Commanding General of the AAF, to create the Air Board. The Air Board consisted of several senior officers and civilians, charged by General Spaatz to assist in developing policies to govern the anticipated independent air force. Maj Gen Hugh Knerr became the Secretary

---

<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 11.

<sup>27</sup> Walton S. Moody, *Building a Strategic Air Force* (Washington DC: United States Government Printing, 1996), 87.

General of the Air Board and immediately attacked the parochial system within the AAF.<sup>28</sup>

General Knerr was dismayed at the rate young officers were leaving the service, particularly nonrated officers. He watched for signs of a rift between those who flew and those who did not. He advised Spaatz to rid the Air Forces of the miniature wings worn by fliers, and also pushed to drop the term 'rated' all together. He saw these as symbols promoting a tiered service. At the Air Board's first meeting in April 1946, Maj Gen Muir S. Fairchild and Maj Gen George Stratemeyer, the commanders of Air University and Continental Air Command, respectively, engaged in a conversation with General Knerr about the possibility of a future Chief of Staff of the Air Force being nonrated. Knerr claimed the only appropriate question was, "is he qualified for the job? Yes, that does violence to our habits of thinking in the past, but we have to look into the future to anticipate the requirements of a highly specialized technical service, the infancy of which was spent in flight that may not necessarily be continued as it grows up."<sup>29</sup> Although the terms rated and nonrated, as well as the badges, remained in the service, Knerr's thinking shows there were high-ranking officials committed to the expansion of the officer corps beyond pilots in the late 1940s.

The Air Board found more common ground when analyzing possible new personnel structures for the Air Force. The Army, and by default the AAF, had operated under the corps system. Each corps was created through legislative action when a given function within the Army grew to sufficient size and importance to the service. Officers were commissioned directly into their corps, not into the Army. They usually

---

<sup>28</sup> Herman S. Wolk, *Planning and Organizing the Post War Air Force, 1943 - 1947* (Office of Air Force History, 1984), 142-144.

<sup>29</sup> First meeting of the air board, p107-8 quoted in Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 19-20.



spent an entire career in one corps, essentially owing as much loyalty to their corps, if not more, than to the Army as a whole.<sup>30</sup>

As proponents of the air component in a ground-oriented service, AAF officers often felt undervalued due to the corps system. Although the corps system allowed the fliers of the 1930s to develop their craft relatively unmolested by the other corps, they were also shut out from most of the high-ranking positions. In the 1930s only 12 percent of Air Corps Officers were of field grade rank, while the rest of the Army's corps averaged 40 percent. After the war, the AAF garnered only four percent of permanent Army Colonel billets, and even fewer general officers. The AAF officers felt they had been slighted by the Army's system, goading them into finding a better system of their own.<sup>31</sup>

After looking at options used by the US Navy, the Royal Canadian Air Force, and the British Royal Air Force, the Air Board rejected each of the other country's systems and at the last minute designed its own approach. They decided Air Force officers should be commissioned directly into the service, not a corps, eliminating loyalty conflicts between function and branch. No element within the service would have legal status, ensuring the Air Force could reorganize as it saw fit without the interference of Congress. The Air Force created two categories of officers, Line of the Air Force (LAF), and Nonline. Officers within the LAF would compete only against each other for promotion on the same list, while the nonline functions of chaplain, medical personnel, and lawyers competed separately within their functional category.<sup>32</sup>

Instead of a corps system, the LAF officers were specialized by career fields. In September 1947, the LAF consisted of nine career fields: Aeronautical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Automotive and Armament, Construction, Personnel and Administration, Supply and

---

<sup>30</sup> Wolk, *Planning and Organizing*, 201.

<sup>31</sup> Shiner, *Foulois and the U.S. Army Air Corps*, 248.

<sup>32</sup> Wolk, *Planning and Organizing*, 202.



Procurement, Information, Flying, and Nonflying Tactical. Each career field had its own career ladder incorporating command positions and an appropriate percentage of billets in the grades of colonel and above. Each career field was also represented at each level of air force staff, ensuring each career field felt important and represented, enabling a higher level of morale. This initial plan, adopted by the Air Board in September 1947, was emphasized as only “an initial attempt at a solution,” not a final settlement of the issue.<sup>33</sup>

As the AAF embraced the new personnel system, officials realized the rated force needed to be better defined. Prior to WWII, those with wings were either commissioned officers or one of just a handful of enlisted men who completed formal pilot training. Throughout the war, the AAF came to embrace several new categories of limited flying ratings including: service pilots, glider pilots, liaison pilots, and flight officers. Each of these groups earned their wings and was under consideration to join the postwar rated career field.

In March 1946, Maj Gen Fred Anderson, the AAF Chief of Personnel, announced that the AAF was going to transition to a rated force composed entirely of officers. By June 1945, the AAF had 3,451 glider pilots, over 2,800 service pilots, 32,000 flight officers, and 2,500 enlisted pilots. The AAF dealt with these individuals in one of four ways: “retention as nonrated officers, reduction to enlisted status for those judged not to be of officer quality, elimination from active duty, or retention as rated officers after upgrading to fully rated status.”<sup>34</sup> Each group presented the service with a unique challenge. The glider pilots and service pilots both had very limited utility to the AAF since their qualifications were limited to specific types of aircraft. Flight officers were airborne warrant officers who the AAF denied a commission

---

<sup>33</sup> Lt Gen Idwal Edwards, Deputy Chief of Staff for Personnel in a speech to the Air War College, 14 Oct 1947, quoted in Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 23.

<sup>34</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 26.

because it felt they lacked appropriate qualities to become an officer. The enlisted pilots presented the greatest challenge because unlike the other groups, which the AAF created as a wartime stopgap measure, enlisted pilots had existed since 1912. During the war, General Arnold had to decide whether to lower the standards for officer candidates or accept more enlisted pilots to meet the demand. He chose to create more enlisted pilots, creating a larger problem at the end of the war.

In April 1946, when the Air Board first met, Maj Gen Elwood Quesada and General Knerr argued over the fate of the enlisted pilots. General Quesada, Commander of the Tactical Air Command, wanted to retain liaison pilots as a career option for enlisted aviators. He saw utility in their ability to spot artillery shell strikes and radio the adjustments necessary to bring guns onto the target. Despite his adamant support, this option was not approved by the air board, a decision that would have repercussions in the Korean war. The board closed its discussions by tacitly agreeing that only commissioned officers should be pilots, and this decision forever shaped the future of the Air Force.

As the AAF terminated several of the war-mandated career fields, “the *Air Force Times* gave the Air Force an ‘A’ for efficiency, but an ‘F’ in humanity for its handling of the enlisted pilots.”<sup>35</sup> Despite this critique, the AAF granted over 80 percent of the 8,000 flight officer applicants a reserve commission to stay in the AAF. A large number of reserve appointments were also given to enlisted pilots. These policy decisions were not taken lightly. The AAF was clearly struggling to deal with the effects of demobilization while also trying to shape smartly the composition of its future independent force.

In addition to shaping the internal composition of the AAF through policy changes, at times the AAF still had to fight against the War

---

<sup>35</sup> Quoted in Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 28.

Department's policies to achieve the AAF's desired force composition. Previously, on December 28, 1945, Congress passed Public Law 281 (PL 79-281), which increased the Army's authorized postwar officer strength from 17,000 to 25,000. The AAF's share was 4,103 officers, bringing the total number of officers to 7,300. As seen during the demobilization discussion, the AAF once again sought quality, choosing to keep those officers with the best service records. The Congressionally mandated method, however, took into account a combination of wartime service and age for determining seniority. AAF leaders did not care about an officer's age; they wanted the ability to select officers with the best leadership qualities since these officers were likely to be the future commanders of the Air Force. Despite the strong opposition of the AAF, the bill passed using the combination method for determining seniority, but left the ratio of rated to nonrated personnel to the AAF. As previously discussed, the AAF chose to pursue its 70:30 ratio of rated to nonrated officers.<sup>36</sup>

Within the War Department, the AAF and the Army battled over how to select the 4,000 officers to receive promotions and regular commissions. A special closed-door War Department committee, without any external input from the AAF, derived a three-part system. It included the review of a candidate's last three wartime efficiency reports, a biographical questionnaire, and an interview. Each of the three parts was worth a set amount of points that were then totaled and used to rank-order the candidates. The AAF quickly realized the criteria for assigning points may work for the other branches, but this system promoted criteria the AAF did not believe was appropriate for the needs of a service eyeing its independence. In a test case between two lieutenant colonels and a major with impressive wartime leadership records, and a lieutenant with no combat experience and no overseas

---

<sup>36</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 15–16.

experience until after the war, somehow the lieutenant was the officer with a composite score high enough to warrant promotion. In June 1946, General Spaatz protested the system in a memo to General Eisenhower, but Eisenhower only agreed to a slight modification to the process. The AAF could arbitrarily add 40 points to records as it desired, but could not take points away from anyone. In the previous example, it did not change the lieutenants consideration for promotion, but could have been enough to allow the other three officers to be considered for promotion as well. By the end of June, the AAF had selected its officers for promotion, 20 percent of them were nonrated, bringing the total percentage of nonrated officers in the AAF to ten.<sup>37</sup>

Throughout the modified process, the AAF still found itself promoting officers with high composite scores but with marginal records. In another memo to General Eisenhower, General Spaatz presented thirteen recommendations that if adopted would allow each branch to essentially choose promotions based on its own criteria. On July 23, 1946, General Eisenhower accepted the changes and overturned the entire composite score system, returning the power of promotion to the individual branches. The AAF was now free to create a core group of officers to lead the future independent Air Force.<sup>38</sup>

General Eisenhower's change of heart was not surprising given the deal he had made with General Arnold. General Arnold bought Eisenhower's unwavering support for defense unification and Air Force independence when Arnold agreed to create a Tactical Air Command (TAC) within the AAF. The primary mission of TAC was to support the ground troops. This agreement created a mutually beneficial situation where the AAF gained an ally in its quest for independence, and in

---

<sup>37</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 29–31.

<sup>38</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 31.

return, the AAF agreed not to abandon tactical airpower.<sup>39</sup> Their relationship was critical to the production of the AAF's future leaders.

Furthermore, Congress gave the AAF a major boost in its desire to create a nucleus of future leaders when it passed Public Law 670 (PL 79-670) on August 8, 1946. PL 79-670 *permanently* doubled the authorized officer strength of the Army compared to the *temporary* measures of PL 79-281. General Eisenhower appropriated 25,000 officer billets to the AAF. The AAF was now allowed to select an additional 18,000 officers for regular commissions based upon whatever criteria it felt most appropriate, which was a key aspect of the Air Force's future.<sup>40</sup>

The AAF continued to promote the 70:30 ratio as the best method to achieve its three goals: "to man the peacetime force, answer the initial surge required in time of conflict, and stay within established manpower ceilings."<sup>41</sup> Although AAF studies showed that only 50 percent of all officer billets required or desired a rated officer, it continued to pursue a policy of including an extra 20 percent reserve of pilots. This reserve allowed the AAF to grow its future pilot leaders with more diverse experience, since at the time few officers had any experience outside of flying. This policy also allowed the AAF to fill quickly the needs of mobilization in the event of a short-notice war. The more pilots currently in the service, the less it would have to rely on the lengthy training process to have an effective fighting force.

The goal of retaining a 70 percent rated officer force created three challenges that went on to plague the USAF. The AAF struggled to meet its initial training requirements, its continuation training requirements, and to gain the Congressional funding required to keep such a high ratio of rated officers. First, in August 1946, a board led by

---

<sup>39</sup> Herman S. Wolk, *Reflections on Air Force Independence* (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2007), 104.

<sup>40</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 32.

<sup>41</sup> Quoted in Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 32.

Brig Gen Edwin Lyon examined the rated personnel policy, adding the criteria for the AAF to maintain the 70:30 ratio at *all* grade levels, creating an initial training shortfall. Due to the large number of pilot deaths during training, and especially during war, the AAF determined that at least 74 percent of newly commissioned officers needed to become rated to keep the later goal of 70 percent. By August 1947, plans were in place to increase pilot training output from 825 to 3,000 officers annually to meet the demand. Other rated training opportunities producing navigators and observers were also increased from 180 to 1,564. These plans took until the middle of 1949 before the USAF could harness their full effect, but they laid the groundwork for the USAF to survive the unplanned battle in Korea.<sup>42</sup>

A second issue with retaining such a high proportion of rated officers was keeping them all current and qualified in their flying duties. On April 1, 1947, Air Inspector Maj Gen Junius Jones discovered over half of all 23,000 pilots on stateside assignment were in nonflying billets. Only 56 percent of aircrew in the AAF's frontline B-29 squadrons were performing rated duties. The service was expending over half of all its flying time trying to keep rated officers at a minimum level of proficiency. The AAF released figures to the press showing that over half of the pilots transferring from stateside assignments to the Pacific had less than 100 hours flying in the past year, far less than the required amount of flying time to be ready for war.

Finally, Congress also took issue with the AAF's rated ratio when it examined the AAF's budget. General Spaatz was forced to defend the number of aircrew when Congress realized the AAF was paying hazardous duty to officers in nonrated positions. Congress also saw the ratio of pilots to airplanes as very bloated. In 1945, there were 2.6 pilots per aircraft; by 1947, with the large reduction in hardware, the ratio was

---

<sup>42</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 33, 36.

five pilots for each aircraft. Congress saw inefficiencies in maintaining a large fleet of aircraft just so the many pilots could remain proficient, and they balked at the flight pay portion of the AAF's budget that amounted to \$67 million annually. Congress reacted by reducing the AAF's budget by \$3.6 million for the 1948 fiscal year, citing its oversized rated officer career-field.<sup>43</sup>

General Spaatz appointed a special board in June 1947 to reexamine the 70:30 ratio. Maj Gen Otto Weyland led the board and its subcommittee to investigate the future composition of the AAF. The board's report claimed the 70:30 was a decent planning tool in 1945, but had no place the future policy of the AAF. General Weyland ventured that by 1949 the rated percentage would stabilize around 64 percent, while his subcommittee determined it was likely to be between 50 and 60 percent. The subcommittee's report argued any percentage recommendation must be determined based upon a specific requirement, not used as general budgetary planning tool. The USAF never formally used the 70:30 ratio planning tool again, but it already had a profound impact on the composition of the USAF's initial cadre of officers. General Weyland's subcommittee presented its report on 25 July 1947, the same day Congress passed the National Security Act of 1947.

### **Independence, Roles, and Missions**

While General Arnold focused on internal reforms and working with the Army to carve out a chunk of the budget and manpower pie, he also advocated organizational changes to the national defense structure, seeking to ensure the independence of the air force and fulfilling his guiding policy. In February 1944, he released a statement supporting the creation of a single secretary of war with four assistant secretaries in charge of the ground, air, naval forces, and a combined bureau of war resources. This plan provided for an air force equal with the other

---

<sup>43</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 34–35.



services and provided for its own air commander and a general staff. The air force would possess “all military aviation except shipborne units operating with the Navy, and those artillery-control and liaison units operating with the Army.” General Arnold called the “greatest lesson of the war,” the “extent to which air, land and sea operations can and must be coordinated by joint planning and unified command.”<sup>44</sup> His statements touched off debates, primarily between the AAF and the Navy, over service unification.

During the following three years of unification debates, the Navy had a counterproposal for each of the War Department’s plans. The Navy generally was leery of the high levels of consolidation inherent in the War Department’s plans. It sought to diffuse them while also struggling to ensure that Navy and Marine Corps aviation remained autonomous from the air force.

During senate testimony in October 1945, General Arnold attempted to diffuse their fears. “I think there is a definite place for the air arm of the fleet, to work in conjunction with the fleet...I do not think that the flat-top planes have the power to deliver the blows that are necessary for our primary air force.”<sup>45</sup> General Arnold was trying to quell the fears of the Navy, but he also appeared to draw a distinction between the amount of firepower each service could bring to the fight. In a subtle way, Arnold was saying he did not want the Navy’s assets because they were not as powerful as the Air Force’s.

In 1946, there were several Congressional hearings and Army-Navy conferences during which each side codified and refined its position. The Navy’s position, as stated by Admiral Richmond Turner’s Congressional testimony, was that “its position as the first line of military security for the United States,” meaning it could never “willingly agree to a

---

<sup>44</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:191–192.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:194.

consolidation of national military forces...that will silence the Navy's voice in military affairs."<sup>46</sup> Despite General Arnold's statement, the Navy also thought the air force was out to "absorb naval aviation."<sup>47</sup> The Commandant of the Marine Corps felt a single Secretary of Defense would be free to abolish the Marine Corps entirely, and to divest of its functions.<sup>48</sup> Navy and Marine commanders were comforted in May 1946 when Congress publicly dismissed their fears, ensuring these actions would not take place.

Throughout this period, the iron triad of Eisenhower, Arnold, and Spaatz stood strong against the Navy in the fight for defense unification. This was somewhat ironic as the AAF continually fought against the Army over demobilization issues, but once General Marshall had moved on, Arnold and Spaatz teamed together to assure Eisenhower they would not divest of tactical airpower in return for Eisenhower's support. The Navy had become their common target in the crosshairs.

In June 1946, President Truman weighed in on unification and sent a letter to the Secretaries of War and of the Navy. He insisted upon a single department of defense with equal branches of the Army, Navy, and Air Force. He pressed to keep naval aviation, although he felt air force personnel should fly some shore-based mission areas. He also advocated for the continued functioning of the Marine Corps. Unfortunately, for the AAF, despite the President's prodding, Congress did little regarding unification for the rest of the year.

In November 1946, Secretary Forrestal pushed the Army and the Navy to work together to produce a mutually acceptable unification plan. Maj Gen Lauris Norstad, director of plans and operations on the War Department's general staff, and Vice Adm Forrest Sherman, the deputy of naval operations, worked together for the rest of the year to find common

---

<sup>46</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:193.

<sup>47</sup> Admiral John Towers, quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:193.

<sup>48</sup> General Alexander Vandegrift, quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:193.

ground. They first tackled the issue of theatre commanders employing a joint staff and not one exclusively of their own service. On December 14, 1946, the Joint Chiefs accepted a proposal from Norstad and Sherman, directing unified theatre commanders to establish a “joint staff with appropriate members from the various components of the services under this command in key positions of responsibility.”<sup>49</sup> Then Norstad and Sherman moved on to tackle the higher level of problems of unification. These two gentlemen presented the president their agreements on January 16, 1947, and on February 27, the White House presented a draft national security act to Congress. After several amendments to the bill, generally designed to protect naval aviation and the Marine Corps, Congress passed and President Truman signed the National Security Act on July 26, 1947, birthing the United States Air Force.

President Truman’s Executive order signed on the same day as the National Security Act defined the USAF’s core functions as: to organize, train, and equip air forces for air operations including joint operations; to gain and maintain general air superiority; to establish local air superiority where and as required; to develop a strategic air force and conduct strategic air reconnaissance operations; to provide airlift and support for airborne operations; to furnish air support to land and naval forces including support of occupation forces; and to provide air transport for the armed forces except as provided by the Navy for its own use.<sup>50</sup> Now that the nation had created the USAF, the air arm had only to fulfill its newly found obligations.

The National Security Act and Executive order from July 26, 1947 were not the end of the debate, but just the start of more focused arguments over each service’s role and mission relating to national defense. Although all three services argued their position, the rapidly

---

<sup>49</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:195.

<sup>50</sup> Executive Order 9877, *Functions of the Armed Forces*, as reprinted in Wolk, *Planning and Organizing*, 271.

changing technological character of warfare generally pitted the USAF and the Navy against each other, especially when trying to define the boundaries of each service's domain. The Air Force believed it should be the only service responsible for long-range strategic air operations. The Navy sought to acquire a supercarrier, and the best method to do so was to discredit the USAF's strategic capabilities in an effort to gain a piece of the strategic mission. At the time, the Air Force was the only service with an aircraft large enough to carry an atomic weapon, but if the Navy could acquire a flattop supercarrier, it too could develop bombers small enough to fit on the carrier and large enough to carry an atomic weapon. Although Secretary of the Air Force, Stewart Symington, assured the Navy the Air Force was not attempting to steal naval aviation, many Navy officers felt the Air Force was after control of all military aviation. Indeed, once Generals Doolittle and Spaatz retired, they both spoke out against the nation retaining "two air forces," claiming naval aviation was redundant.<sup>51</sup>

The Navy and the Air Force also fought over transport assets. Rear Admiral Joseph Reeves, commander of the Naval Air Transport Service, cast doubt upon the Air Transport Service's capabilities while testifying before Congress in March 1948. He attacked the USAF transport command to undermine the planned merging of naval transports with Air Force transports into the Military Air Transport Service. He saw the merging as another Air Force move to consolidate all aircraft under one service.<sup>52</sup>

In an effort to settle these disputes between the services, the new Secretary of Defense, James Forrestal, held two conferences with the Joint Chiefs of Staff at Key West, Florida, and Newport, Rhode Island, in March and August 1948. By the end of the conferences, the services

---

<sup>51</sup> Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:200.

<sup>52</sup> Wolk, *Planning and Organizing*, 220–221.

were able to agree on some contentious points. The USAF and Navy agreed the Navy could pursue any weapon it deemed necessary as long as it would not develop a separate strategic air force.<sup>53</sup> On the air transport issue, Forrestal ordered the merging of transport assets despite the Navy's concerns. The service chiefs also agreed to support each other through collateral functions, but the most contentious problems, such as the exact definition of where the boundaries between Naval and Air Force domains exist, were not settled. The service chiefs all agreed on a single common source of concern. The underlying cause of most interservice disagreements was not directly over the mission at hand, but was usually about the funding and appropriations associated with those missions.<sup>54</sup> These fiscally based rifts between the services got worse before they got better, the USAF and Navy continued to fight each other whenever they had the chance. The Army generally fell back into its role as a big brother to the USAF, and cooperated under the agreements reached between Eisenhower, Arnold, and Spaatz.

### **Summary**

As early air minded leaders, Generals Arnold and Spaatz analyzed the market for airpower and shaped their product to provide national security and fulfill their guiding policy. They identified external threats and challenges to the germinating Air Force and either overcame them or bargained their way to success. General Arnold drowned General Marshall's arguments by painting a picture of strategic fear, and highlighting the economical nature of an independent Air Force. He then struck a mutually beneficial deal with General Eisenhower. They also continuously assessed the internal Air Force mechanisms with an eye for future challenges. They reorganized the Air Force planning process so it

---

<sup>53</sup> Jeffrey G Barlow, *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950* (Washington, DC: Government Reprint Press, 2001), 123, 129-130.

<sup>54</sup> Alfred Goldberg, *A History of the United States Air Force, 1907-1957* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1957), 115-116.

could adequately concentrate on its number one priority, creating an independent force, despite the plummeting resources during demobilization. They also scrutinized the composition of the officer corps, continually experimenting and assessing the ratio of rated and nonrated officers the new service required.

In order to secure their final goal, Arnold and Spaatz found their compromises with War Department leaders during demobilization made a partner for an independent Air Force. They successfully gained General Eisenhower's trust, turning the service unification battle into a two versus one fight. They also successfully argued and convinced Congress and the President that an independent Air Force was in the economic and national security interests of the United States. The AAF officers heeded General Spaatz's guiding policy: they created an autonomous Air Force in a unified military establishment, reorganized the Air Force, and successfully created an Air Force-in-being. Without the leadership and guidance from these two commanders, the Army Air Forces might have likely remained within the War Department. This type of strong leadership, and the ability to argue successfully how an independent strategic bombing force is an economical solution to the United States' national security challenges, is as applicable today as it was in the late 1940s.

### **Chapter 3: Coherent Action—Fulfilling Obligations**

United States airmen earned a hard fought victory in 1947 when the Air Force became a separate service, even though the force was a mere shell of its former wartime glory. By December 1946, demobilization reduced the Air Force from 218 combat effective groups to 50 groups, only two of which were combat ready. On May 31, 1947, Congress reduced the USAF to just 303,614 personnel, its post-war nadir. With this modest force, US airmen had to fulfill the obligations created by their strategic bombing rhetoric—the same rhetoric which had prompted the nation's leaders to grant airmen their autonomy in the first place—and now the vision placing them at the forefront of national defense in the very moment of their birth. As the Air Force followed its guiding policy, it also created coherent actions to support that policy: defining an enemy, prioritizing and reorganizing the force, and eventually specializing. Prioritizing and reorganizing the force, took the guiding policy to new depths; the Air Force needed an independent strategic bombing force, not just an independent force. The bombing force was the key to General Arnold and Spaatz's economic arguments for the Air Force. These actions helped the Air Force fight for larger share of the military budget, although it would take another war before the President would fully lift the veil of austerity.

The USAF faced many obstacles in its quest to fill the chalice of national defense. Outside the United States, the postwar political landscape was evolving, causing strain on US-Soviet relations. President Truman continued seeking ways to balance the nation's budget. His primary method was to embrace the ideal of a small military, squeezing every cent out of the armed services' budget he possibly could. US political leaders began to determine which country might be the nation's next enemy, but provided military planners with little objective guidance. The Air Force struggled to connect the obligations of this shifting external



political landscape with its internal fiscal constraints, forcing it to change its organizational structure in several ways. The atomic bomb became the primary method used to compensate for the small size of the USAF, but even that monopoly of power was short-lived. In the short time between WWII and the Korean War, Strategic Air Command (SAC) became the nation's vanguard of defense, but it too struggled to balance the competing demands of efficiency and effectiveness. Finally, the 1940s ended with two separate geographic regions on the brink of conflict. Each of these challenges shaped the future of the Air Force in its quest for national defense.

### **Defining an Enemy**

Military planners had struggled to create an accurate postwar plan since 1943, primarily because of uncertainty. As the first coherent action, AAF planners were not sure if their plans should be aimed at Germany, Japan, or the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union appeared to be the most advantageous choice for AAF planners, because any plans to fight Russia would inevitably require the services of long-range bombers. However, as long as the war in the Pacific still raged, the United States could not risk losing Russia as an ally if it found out the United States was planning an attack against it. By June 1946, though, several shifts in the political scene prodded General Arnold at Potsdam to state quietly that he believed Russia would be the next enemy of the United States.<sup>1</sup>

Even though Russia's actions between 1944 and 1948 made it the top suspect, Air Force leaders struggled to justify a large air force when no country in the world presented a real threat to the United States. The Soviet Union had no strategic bombing capability at the time, which undermined the fundamental argument of US airpower, that the United States could no longer depend upon the physical barriers of the ocean to

---

<sup>1</sup> Michael S Sherry, *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-45* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 189.

protect its territory due to the threat of enemy bombers. Mahan wrote that the best naval defense was a concentrated offensive naval fleet. The USAF embraced this mindset and set out to fulfill its responsibilities to defend the United States by manning, equipping, and training an “offensive force-in-being as the first line of defense.”<sup>2</sup> This was the core of the strategic bombing rhetoric, and it remained the USAF leaders’ argument for all future efforts to build a large force.

The offensive attitudes of air force leaders and planners were justified by joint forces planners as early as October 1945. The Joint Strategic Survey Committee (JSSC) of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) prepared a study regarding the use of the atomic bomb and a way forward for the United States. The JSSC felt the United States would be at a disadvantage if the Soviets acquired atomic weapons because US industry and population centers were clustered in coastal regions making them susceptible to naval attack. In contrast, the Soviets had dispersed their industry and strategic targets far inland as a result of WWII. Therefore, the JSSC made two recommendations. The United States should establish “defensive frontiers well advanced in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and to the shores of the Arctic.”<sup>3</sup> Second, the United States needed to acquire a large atomic weapons stockpile to execute any future strategic war plan. Both of these recommendations required the use of airpower, reinforcing the USAF argument for a large force.

In November 1945, the Joint Intelligence Staff (JIS) surveyed Russian objectives and capabilities. They concluded the Soviets were attempting to “establish and consolidate Soviet hegemony in peripheral areas.”<sup>4</sup> The JIS estimated the Soviets would keep 213 divisions and 3.3

---

<sup>2</sup> Perry M Smith, *The Air Force Plans for Peace, 1943-1945*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970), 37.

<sup>3</sup> JSSC, “Over-all Effect of Atomic Bomb on Warfare and Military Organization,” 26 Oct 1945, quoted in Harry Borowski, *A Hollow Threat: Strategic Air Power and Containment before Korea* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982), 93.

<sup>4</sup> JIC 250/6, 29 Nov 1945, quoted in Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 93.

million men in Eastern Europe, in addition to 84 divisions in its satellite nations. They concluded the Red Army could overrun most of continental Europe, Turkey, Iran and/or Afghanistan; as well as Korea, Manchuria, and North China. In both regions, Allied and American forces were so outnumbered they would be unable to stem this tide.<sup>5</sup> Even after Soviet demobilization, the JIS estimated the USSR would maintain approximately 113 divisions, 50 of them in occupied Europe. Without exaggeration, the staff warned that the Soviets could overrun most of Western Europe by 1 January 1948. In addition, the JIS believed the Soviets could build atomic bombs by 1950.<sup>6</sup> These facts encouraged US planners to include the use of atomic weapons in their assumptions to offset the Russian numerical advantage. Assuming atomic weapons would be used further enhanced the USAF position, since it was the only service that could deliver them.

Joint planners and intelligence analysts were not the only experts watching Russia. At the national level, George Kennan suggested a shift in American policy in February 1946, when he sent his famous 'long telegram.' He saw Soviet realist intentions that could only be "contained by the adroit and vigilant application of counter-force at a series of constantly shifting geographical and political points, corresponding to the shifts and maneuvers of Soviet policy, but which cannot be charmed or talked out of existence. The Russians look forward to a duel of infinite duration, and they see that already they have scored a great success."<sup>7</sup> This marked the beginning of a political shift by the United States against the Soviet Union. It also provided General Arnold with ammunition for his comment at Potsdam, as well as a purpose for continued USAF focus on the USSR.

---

<sup>5</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 93–94.

<sup>6</sup> Steven Ross, *American War Plans, 1945-1950* (Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996), 6.

<sup>7</sup> X (George Kennan), "The Sources of Soviet Conduct," *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947, 566–82.

The Air Force solidified this focus on October 29, 1946, when Maj Gen Lauris Norstad, director of the War Department's Plans and Operations Division, briefed the president regarding Soviet capabilities and probable actions in the next five years. He felt "there exists a fundamental conflict between the aims and purposes of the United States and the Soviet Union...and at this time it appears not only the most probable, but in fact the only probable source of trouble in the foreseeable future."<sup>8</sup> The President did not object, and the Air Force finally had an enemy to plan against.

Further shaping United States policy regarding the Soviet Union in a speech to Congress on March 12, 1947, President Truman announced 'the Truman Doctrine,' which committed the United States to aid democracies resisting enslavement by a minority. George Marshall, now the Secretary of State, bolstered this policy on June 5, 1947, when he announced the European Recovery Act, or the 'Marshall Plan.' This plan called for economic aid from the United States to help European nations heal the economic wounds of WWII. The Marshall Plan, in conjunction with the Truman Doctrine, marked a formal and drastic change in American foreign policy: an aggressive peacetime interventionist foreign policy.<sup>9</sup>

Naming an enemy helped air force planners, but did not make their solutions easily attainable. In the wake of demobilization and President Truman's fiscal parsimony, Maj Gen Hugh Knerr, special assistant to General Spaatz, warned the Air Board in September 1947: "As with any vigorous organization freed from onerous restraint there is danger of its feeling its oats and lashing out at all obstacles at the very beginning. Such action would be a great mistake, for we simply do not

---

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 95.

<sup>9</sup> Roger G Miller, *To Save a City: The Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949* (College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2008), 14-16.

have the muscle on our bones to carry through with such desires.”<sup>10</sup> The USAF knew it had gained its independence, but it was still weak and must prioritize the results it promised the nation. In other words, it simply could not afford to embrace all aspects of airpower equally. The new Secretary of the Air Force, Stuart Symington, claimed in the event of war, “the Air Force must be prepared to carry out the air defense of the United States...it must be prepared to undertake immediate and powerful retaliation, a capacity which is itself the only real deterrent to aggression in the world today.”<sup>11</sup> He clearly believed in favoring an offensive air force, and went on to assert that anything less than 70 groups would impede the nation’s ability to retaliate. He thought the USAF could not field 70 groups at current funding levels.

In 1947, Air Force leaders were grappling with the required force structure to fulfill their responsibilities to the nation. “The total military budget for fiscal year 1948, as well as that portion allotted to AAF research and development, fell nearly 20 percent from the 1947 level; funds for a new aircraft procurement decreased by 7 percent, to \$281 million. Aviators considered these reduced amounts insufficient for building a modern air arm.”<sup>12</sup> As of March 1947, the AAF had established 55 groups as an interim goal because of low congressional funding. Of the 55 groups, only 36 were operational: 8 very heavy bomber, 15 fighter, 3 light bomber, 2 tactical reconnaissance, 6 troop carrier, 1 long-range photo reconnaissance, and 1 long-range mapping. To operate all 55 groups successfully required further economy of labor, or more funding. General Spaatz pushed to stretch their personnel in mid-1947 when, as the first Chief of Staff of the Air Force, he refused to give up on the goal of 70 groups. Spaatz decided to activate all 70

---

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Herman S. Wolk, *Planning and Organizing the Post War Air Force, 1943 - 1947* (Office of Air Force History, 1984), 182.

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in Wolk, *Planning and Organizing*, 215.

<sup>12</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 92.

groups, but to keep 15 of them at skeleton strength. By December 1947, the Air Force had manned and equipped only 47 groups with varying degrees of operational efficiency. It was clear that it would be difficult to reach 55 groups, much less the ultimate goal of 70 groups.<sup>13</sup>

By 1948, USAF leaders felt they were beginning to make headway toward stronger funding for the Service. The Finletter Commission's Report in January and the congressional Aviation Policy Board report in March both reinforced the Air Force's argument. These reports stated American military airpower was inadequate and hopelessly wanting for the future. They called for a national security structure built around the USAF. The Air Force needed to be capable of "dealing a crushing counter offensive blow on the aggressor," and to do this they called for a dramatic increase in procurement to build a seventy-group air force.<sup>14</sup>

While the United States focused on creating a larger air force, changes were occurring in Europe. The Czechoslovakian government fell to a communist coup in February 1948. Up until this time, there was still some optimism toward the Soviet Union and her intentions in the West. In 1946, Soviet Troops had left Iran, and military aid to Greece and Turkey in 1947 looked promising. Although announced eight months earlier, United States lawmakers and European leaders were still debating the specifics of implementing the Marshall Plan. On April 3, 1948, the President finally signed the plan into law. The Czechoslovakian incident further solidified US and Western European resolve against the spread of communism.<sup>15</sup>

Still, by mid-1948, American foreign policy in Europe remained limited to Truman's vague containment policy and the Marshall plan. This left military planners grasping for details and objectives. The

---

<sup>13</sup> Wolk, *Planning and Organizing*, 215, 218.

<sup>14</sup> Phillip S Meilinger, *Bomber: The Formation and Early Years of Strategic Air Command* (Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, Air Force Research Institute, 2012), 155.

<sup>15</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 118.



National Security Council (NSC) had also not yet established any specific foreign policy objectives. Therefore, the military had no detailed responsibilities, and the planners were unclear on the president's attitude toward uses of the atomic bomb beyond the basic assumption it would constitute the core of any large military response. The President further confused planners when he dispatched conventional B-29s to Europe in the summer of 1948 in response to the Soviet blockade of Berlin.<sup>16</sup> Assuming the Soviets would find out these bombers were not nuclear-capable, the planners saw this as a strange message to send the Soviets during a crisis when all of the nation's war plans relied on atomic weapons.

By November 1948, the NSC finally provided peacetime and wartime objectives in Europe by publishing NSC-20/4. The State Department had written NSC-20/1 claiming that the Soviet Union might be vulnerable to "extensive destruction of important industrial and economic targets from the air," adding a "strong military could demonstrate resolve, deter aggression, encourage free nations to resist Soviet encroachment, and enable the United States to fight if deterrence failed."<sup>17</sup> It called for everything short of directly sanctioning a strategic air offensive. Despite objections by the JCS that military commitments exceeded their capabilities, the NSC modified the document into NSC-20/4, which warned of the wasteful usage of national resources in a time of peace—further privileging an air-centric defense posture. By the end of 1948, military planners had objectives to plan with, but it would take more than a shift in national policy toward the Soviet Union to loosen President Truman's purse strings for national defense.

---

<sup>16</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 129.

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in Walton S. Moody, *Building a Strategic Air Force* (Washington DC: United States Government Printing, 1996), 216–217.



### **Internal Reorganization and Priorities**

While the nation was shifting its national foreign policy, the AAF had undergone significant organizational changes to prepare for its new role as the vanguard of national defense. These changes composed the second coherent action that directly affected its ability to fulfill its upcoming obligations to the nation.

As early as November 1945, as air force leaders contemplated options for a future force structure, General Spaatz noted there was a “tendency to over-emphasize long-range bombardment, and to ignore the versatile application of airpower.” At one point, the AAF was considering putting all of the combat airpower in one organization, the Continental Air Forces. By January 1946, however, Spaatz consolidated combat power across three major commands: Strategic Air Command (SAC), Air Defense Command (ADC), and Tactical Air Command (TAC), providing the organizational semblance of a balanced force structure that would not survive the post-war peace.<sup>18</sup>

Spaatz commissioned SAC on March 21, 1946, envisioning the command as a long-range striking force equipped with conventional and atomic capable B-29s and possibly B-36s. The command was stationed in the continental United States, and would deploy to forward bases when required for strategic missions. SAC’s mission statement was “to conduct long-range operations in any part of the world at any time, to perform maximum long-range reconnaissance over land or sea; and to provide combat operations in any part of the globe, employing the latest and most advanced weapons.”<sup>19</sup> The AAF immediately emphasized the importance of SAC by assigning two complete numbered Air Forces to the command, including 84,000 personnel and 1,300 aircraft.<sup>20</sup>

---

<sup>18</sup> Robert Frank Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1907-1960*, vol. 1 (Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989), 207.

<sup>19</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:207.

<sup>20</sup> Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, 65.

The Air Defense command was activated on March 27, 1946, to ensure there would never be another Pearl Harbor. AAF leaders envisioned a centralized command system to integrate the elements of national air defense, but providing forces for such a command crossed service boundaries and proved challenging. Although the new command technically had six numbered air forces, they were generally hollow commands due to the shrinking nature of the AAF at the time. The plan in the event of an emergency was for the Navy, SAC, and TAC to all make fighters available to ADC.<sup>21</sup> This command was largely neglected by the AAF leaders, receiving only 7000 personnel initially.<sup>22</sup>

General Spaatz activated TAC on the same day as SAC in 1946, and moved it to Langley field in Virginia so it was close to the Army Ground Force Headquarters at Fort Monroe, Virginia. The mission of TAC was to cooperate with land and sea forces in ground and amphibious operations, and to train and equip tactical air units for operations anywhere in the world. TAC was also to promote “progressive development of air-ground coordination techniques and doctrines.”<sup>23</sup> The command had three numbered air forces assigned, totaling 26,000 personnel, but its priority faded as the AAF continued to push for independence based on the rhetoric and reality of offensive strategic bombing.<sup>24</sup>

The AAF continued to distinguish between its two types of airlift capabilities by splitting them into two different major commands. Air Transport Command was responsible for air transport service between the United States and the overseas theaters and among the overseas theaters. The troop carrier units trained specifically for executing airborne assault and air-land operations, as well as intra-theater airlift at

---

<sup>21</sup> Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:208.

<sup>22</sup> Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, 65.

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:208.

<sup>24</sup> Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, 65.

the discretion of the theater commanders.<sup>25</sup> These troop carrier units were assigned to TAC. Both types of airlift became critical to the future of the USAF in the summer of 1948, during the Berlin airlift. Although the AAF created three equal combat commands in 1946, SAC became the focal point of AAF and USAF efforts for the remainder of the 1940s.

### **SAC Focuses on Efficiency and Generalization**

Between March 1946 and September 1948, SAC struggled to fulfill its role in developing JCS war plans. These plans depended on a proficient and credible offensive atomic bombing force for retaliatory strikes. The JCS planners sought to produce realistic operational war plans in the face of nebulous presidential guidance on employment of atomic weapons and without clear political goals regarding the Soviet Union. At the same time, SAC leaders worked hard to prepare and equip the command to execute the JCS plans despite the limited resources imposed by the President. SAC initially faltered as efficiency and generalization became the foundation of the command. These actions became incoherent, they were not in line with the guiding policy of creating a credible and independent bombing force.

In March 1946, General Spaatz chose the senior general in the AAF, George C. Kenney, to lead the new command. General Kenney was then serving on the Military Staff Committee of the United Nations (UN), which seemed to make him the perfect choice as SAC commander since at the time it seemed SAC bombers might be the primary US contribution to a UN police force. Kenney had also earned the respect of many Americans while commanding WWII air forces in the Southwest Pacific (SWPA). But, Kenney had hoped to control both tactical and strategic forces under a combined Air Force Combat command. He did not see a difference between tactical and strategic airpower, and therefore felt slighted when he found out his command did not encompass the tactical

---

<sup>25</sup> Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:208.

aviation assets.<sup>26</sup> His attitude and focus on future opportunities at the United Nations also led to the neglect of SAC.

General Kenney's tenure as commander of SAC is an unfortunate example of how not to command an organization. Kenney often traveled for public speaking engagements, furthering his chances of commanding a future UN Air Force. The Air Force had come to depend upon his oratory skills as an airpower advocate during and after WWII, but in 1946 it needed him at his command. He often misprioritized his tasks, and his "frequent absences from SAC led to a remote management style that contrasted starkly with the intense personal engagement that had defined his leadership in the SWPA. Too many important decisions were left to deputies who lacked Kenney's understanding of airpower, and SAC's efficiency, energy, and morale rapidly declined."<sup>27</sup> His speaking engagements became a burden not only on SAC, but to the Air Force in general as his speeches often opposed official air force policy, including eventually speaking out against the acquisition of the B-36, a key platform for the future of SAC. His many road trips left SAC neglected, and it slowly crumbled.

Shortly after the AAF established SAC, JCS planners began cobbling together a joint war-fighting plan aimed against the Soviet Union. The JCS created their plans under three assumptions. First, the Soviets did not intend to launch a war. Instead, they planned to use subversion and intimidation to spread communism. If war came, it would be by accident. Second, the Russians would start the war; the JCS did not plan an offensive first strike. Third, a war with Russia would be global and unlimited. They had no political guidance from civilian leaders, so they developed their own political objectives that required Russian capitulation. The planners never mentioned or

---

<sup>26</sup> Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, X, 63–64.

<sup>27</sup> Alan Stephens, "George C. Kenney: 'A Kind of Renaissance Airman,'" in *Air Commanders*, ed. John Andreas Olsen (Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013), 99.

contemplated either a surrogate war or a limited war. Eventually in 1948, NSC-20 would provide them the more detailed political guidance they so strongly desired, but these three assumptions remained unchanged throughout much iteration of plans between 1945 and 1950.<sup>28</sup>

Between April and June 1946, the JCS planners produced four versions of *Pincher*, the first war plan designed to fight the Soviet Union. The plan's primary task was a "prompt strategic air offensive" to "destroy the Soviet war-making capability."<sup>29</sup> The plan was for SAC to deliver nuclear weapons against targets in the USSR launched from advanced bases in Britain, Egypt, and India. This first round of planning was never approved by the JCS, though. From the beginning of SAC's existence, the joint planning staff based the nation's war plans on the expected and not actual capabilities of SAC. This included its atomic capability, despite a general lack of guidance from the president on whether he would choose to use such weapons against the USSR. It was clear from the very first planning efforts that the joint community was linking national defense to the effectiveness of SAC.

In December 1946, the AAF made a critical move. Maj Gen Clements McMullen was chosen as General Kenney's deputy commander. McMullen had been Kenney's logistics chief in the Pacific. McMullen's personal callsign was 'Concrete,' he was known as an uncompromising man who always got the job done.<sup>30</sup> General McMullen's first priority within SAC was to squeeze more efficiency out of an already lean organization, making 1947 a very volatile year for the command. With General Kenney often traveling, Maj Gen McMullen was

---

<sup>28</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 151–152.

<sup>29</sup> Gian Gentile, "Planning for Preventive War, 1945-1950," *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 2000, 69.

<sup>30</sup> Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, 85.

free to shape the organization in accordance with his own perceptions of efficient organizational structure.

SAC hit its first turbulence in 1946 as the USAF struggled to determine how to organize each wing's command structure. The Wing Base plan, the USAF's first version of an organizational structure, allowed each group a maximum of 287 officers, and the support groups did not report to the same wing commander as the combat groups. This created friction between those officers executing the mission and those supporting the mission. SAC quickly fixed the command relationship, but McMullen also immediately put his stamp on the command by limiting each group to 227 officers. The 'McMullen ceilings' arbitrarily limited each group by 50 officers. He felt he could create efficiencies at every level of command, especially by streamlining all group, wing, and numbered AF staffs. In the past, he had always stripped his own commands down to the bone, and now felt he could do the same to all his subordinate commands. The SAC wing commanders felt this plan might work if all their personnel were present, but between attending schools, executing training missions at forward bases, leave, or illness, at least twenty percent of people were always gone. In one case, Fifteenth Air Force asked for twenty percent more people to overcome this issue. McMullen immediately denied the request, as his philosophy was "Give them half of what they asked for, work them twice as hard, and they will get twice as much done."<sup>31</sup> Kenney, when he did attend to SAC, tended to agree with McMullen, once stating, rather shockingly, "The peacetime economy requirement for the manning of units of the USAF is relatively more important than the requirement for maintaining the tactical integrity of our units."<sup>32</sup> This focus on efficiency symbolized the mentality leading to the downfall of both commanders.

---

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Meilinger, *Bomber*, 116.

<sup>32</sup> Quoted in Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 66.



McMullen went a few steps further than limiting the number of personnel. In an effort to get more out of the few people he had, he revived cross-training, a program requiring every pilot be proficient in every aircrew duty. McMullen's ideas were from the prewar era, where the relatively small size of the air corps, its isolation, and its 'newness' contributed to practices where pilots were needed in all positions to link the support duties to the primary wartime tasks. This was not the case in the late 1940s, though. Aircrew duties required more specialization, not further dispersion of responsibilities. Commanders feared the long-term results of the additional training requirements, at a time when pilots could barely maintain proficiency in their primary duties.<sup>33</sup>

McMullen thought the cross-training plan would allow a crew to operate with three officers instead of five, if NCOs were allowed to serve as flight engineers and if navigators were trained as bombardiers and radar observers. As he saw it, SAC could man its 17 groups with 3,772 officers and 37,500 enlisted men, saving 2,300 officers.<sup>34</sup> He could reduce each B-29 squadron from 80 to 54 officers without doing any harm to the mission.<sup>35</sup> Many SAC commanders disagreed. This new program duplicated the basic aircrew training missions of ATC, but without associated funding or personnel increases. Somehow, McMullen saw his plans as saving manpower, and therefore beneficial for SAC. But subordinate commanders estimated it would take pilots one to two years of training to meet the intent of his program.

SAC instituted its cross-training plan in August 1947, creating even more skepticism amongst junior officers. They felt McMullen's policies hurt nonrated officers even more than rated members, and his ceilings on nonrated personnel seemed to be in direct contradiction to

---

<sup>33</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 58–59.

<sup>34</sup> Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, 87.

<sup>35</sup> Vance Mitchell, *Air Force Officers: Personnel Policy Development, 1944-1974* (Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996), 67–68.



Spaatz's push to attract good nonrated officers into the Air Force. "McMullen had an obsession that only pilots were any good," cried one SAC officer.<sup>36</sup> General McMullen had clearly been eliminating many nonrated positions throughout the command, expecting his rated officers to pick-up the slack. Although McMullen is most often blamed for wanting at least 80 percent rated officers in SAC, General Kenney had already established an arbitrary 20 percent ceiling on nonrated officers before McMullen was in place.<sup>37</sup> McMullen administered these new policies, and he did so by threatening those subordinates with poor attitudes. He made it known that their outlook would reflect adversely on their effectiveness report if they did not change their ways.<sup>38</sup>

As McMullen instituted his schemes, the JCS planners were creating a new plan to fight the Soviets. In November 1947, operation *Broiler* became the first war plan against the USSR approved by the JCS. Similar to *Pincher*, it included an early atomic campaign using advanced bases to launch an air offensive, but also took into account the anticipated reduced resources available in 1948 due to reduced Congressional military funding. The primary objective of *Broiler* was also similar to *Pincher*; it called for the destruction of Soviet war-making capacity through an atomic bombing campaign.<sup>39</sup> Although this approved plan seemed to provide the joint need for a larger strategic air force, it had little immediate impact on resources, leaving the Air Force and SAC woefully unable to fulfill their role if war came.

While *Broiler* attempted to account for the reduced size of the Air Force, the JCS planners were blind to what was happening inside SAC. By December 1947, McMullen's policies dropped the percentage of nonrated officers in SAC from 38 to 27 percent, further increasing the

---

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, 88.

<sup>37</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 69.

<sup>38</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Gian Gentile, *How Effective Is Strategic Bombing?: Lessons Learned from World War II to Kosovo* (New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001), 144.

nonflying responsibilities of rated officers. His policies drove the morale of the rated officers through the floor as they coped with maintaining proficiency in their primary position, cross-training into new specialties, and keeping up with their desk job.<sup>40</sup> By the end of 1947, SAC had been reduced to 44,000 personnel with only 319 B-29s and 350 fighters in 11 groups, only two of those groups were operational and only one had atomic capable B-29s.<sup>41</sup> SAC could not execute *Broiler* with this force.

SAC was also facing equipment and basing limitations in its attempt to fulfill JCS plans. The plans called for the use of forward bases because of the relatively short 3,000 mile range of the B-29. Throughout 1947, SAC experimented with rotational deployments to many of the proposed forward bases in Europe, the Pacific, and arctic regions. European operations were plagued with inadequate airfields and limited training operations due to diplomatic clearance problems. Pacific operations went relatively smoothly, but attempting to operate in the arctic proved troublesome. Neither the USAF's personnel nor aircraft were prepared for the harsh environmental conditions, and they came to realize arctic operations would require bases with the full infrastructure planning of a continental base along with the additional special equipment requirements created by the unique environment.<sup>42</sup> This would take a large proportion of the USAF's shrinking budget to upgrade each of these bases to a condition where SAC bombers could execute a mission. In addition, none of these bases were equipped with weapons loading pits or atomic storage facilities, both requirements for a successful B-29 atomic mission.<sup>43</sup> Planners realized that once the USAF received the B-50 with its longer range, and the B-36 with its promised 10,000 mile range, they could forgo the requirements of basing

---

<sup>40</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 69.

<sup>41</sup> Moody, *Building a Strategic AF*, 93.

<sup>42</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 72-88.

<sup>43</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 17.

operations in the arctic region, so it chose to save money by ignoring these requirements.

As SAC emphasized efficiency in 1947, its effectiveness suffered. The command had gained only 200 officers and 5,500 enlisted personnel that year, but created eight additional groups and tripled the number of B-29s flown and maintained. The effects of this imbalanced approach became clear in 1948 as the USAF finally began to examine the effectiveness of SAC within joint war plans, which were taking a more finalized form.<sup>44</sup>

In 1948, the JCS planners devised three new versions of a war plan aimed at the Soviet Union: *Bushwacker*, *Crankshaft*, and *Halfmoon*. These plans all called for an “air offensive against vital strategic elements of the Soviet war-making capacity,” much like earlier plans.<sup>45</sup> These new plans highlighted the limitations of the current force. The *Bushwacker* plan added a need for a large operational force to be ready on or before D-Day to prevent the Soviets from overrunning Europe. The JCS quickly dismissed this plan as an unlikely possibility given the fiscal constraints of 1948. Planners then created the *Crankshaft* plan based on US military forces in existence at the time. The result was a plan that assumed western allies could not stop the initial attack of Russia, and therefore the planners had to concede Western Europe, the Middle East, the Persian Gulf, north and central China, and South Korea. This would be a dramatic loss for democracy if it occurred. The planners designed *Halfmoon* as a short-range emergency war plan that only looked at the first year of fighting. It too relied on an atomic air offensive launched from forward bases, but highlighted that there were not enough Army battalions to insure the forward bases in the Middle East for bomber

---

<sup>44</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 68.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Gentile, “Planning for Preventive War,” 70.

use.<sup>46</sup> Additionally, the initial target list included 70 Russian cities requiring 133 atomic bombs, with follow-on targets requiring an additional 200 atomic bombs. The Air Force did not have this many atomic weapons at the time.<sup>47</sup> Even in a scaled down plan such as *Halfmoon*, the actual force level was inadequate to provide for the defense of US allies in Europe.

As planners developed these schemes in 1948, the power of the atomic bomb was supposed to overcome the limitations of a small air force. The USAF inventory had declined from 68,400 aircraft in 1946 to 20,800 aircraft in 1948, only about half of which were combat machines. In contrast, the 1948 JCS war plans called for 38,573 aircraft. By 1948, the entire USAF had only 387,000 personnel. This limited force relied on the atomic weapon to compensate for deficiencies, but military planners did not know how many atomic weapons were in existence due to strict control of inventories by the Atomic Energy Commission. Later it was revealed that the USAF had only two implosion atomic weapons in June 1945, one year later it had nine atomic bombs, two of which were for test use only. By 1947, the numbers increased to 13 atomic weapons and to 50 weapons by 1948.<sup>48</sup> These numbers were far short of the 333 bombs required by the JCS plans. The assembly teams that put the weapons together were also in short supply. In June 1948, assembly teams could build only two bombs each day, denying any quick reaction capability. Finally, the atomic bombers and crews were also in critical supply. SAC had only one group to fly the specially modified B-29s, code-named Silver Plate, to carry atomic weapons. In 1946, there were 27 Silver Plate B-29s; by 1948, there were 32 aircraft with 12 fully trained and 18 partially

---

<sup>46</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 79–98.

<sup>47</sup> Anthony Cave Brown, ed., *Drop Shot: The United States Plan for War with the Soviet Union in 1957* (New York, NY: Dial Press/James Wade, 1978), 6.

<sup>48</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 12.

trained aircrew. Well short of a capable atomic war fighting organization, SAC had become a hollow force.<sup>49</sup>

General Spaatz did not fix the SAC leadership problem as Chief of Staff of the Air Force. Despite giving Generals Kenney and McMullen a direct written order to fix their personnel policy issues, he never fired either of them. It was not until Hoyt Vandenberg took over from Spaatz on April 30, 1948, that the USAF began to take action against Kenney and McMullen.<sup>50</sup>

In the spring of 1948, famed aviator Charles A Lindbergh examined the combat capability of the USAF's atomic squadrons at the behest of General Vandenberg. He submitted his report in September 1948, supporting the hunches of Vandenberg. In his report, he blamed the problems found within SAC on "numerous assignments to temporary duty, an intensive cross-training program, and extracurricular flying activities, which have seriously interfered with training in the primary mission of the atomic squadrons. Resulting absences and frequent changes in home location have had a bad effect on family relationships and on overall morale. Line crews, as well as flight crews are over worked."<sup>51</sup> Lindbergh furthered his report by recommending changes including eliminating cross-training to focus on the primary mission, training needed to simulate a wartime environment, and suggesting commanders create better working and living conditions to attract the "highest quality personnel."<sup>52</sup>

SAC's early problems stemmed from a combination of low funding and manpower along with poor leadership. One author claims General Kenney lacked a strategic bombing background, leading to the poor

---

<sup>49</sup> Ross, *American War Plans*, 12.

<sup>50</sup> Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 70.

<sup>51</sup> Charles A. Lindbergh, "Report to General Vandenberg," 14 Sept 1948, p2, quoted in Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 146.

<sup>52</sup> Lindbergh report, p3, quoted in Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 146; Mitchell, *Air Force Officers*, 70.

performance of SAC. He furthers that the war in the Pacific was essentially a tactical war until General LeMay launched strategic missions against Japan, which contributed to the poor training given SAC units under Kenney's command.<sup>53</sup> This may have also led to a lack of acceptance by the bomber community as their commander. This is all plausible, but a more likely cause is that General Kenney remained largely absent, focused more intently on his responsibilities to the United Nations and his general advocacy arguments for airpower than to his SAC responsibilities.

Given General Kenney's war experiences, his personal leadership within SAC may have resulted in a different outcome. He lost 75 percent of his squadron in WWI, a rate he blamed on the lack of sufficient, realistic training. In WWII he felt poorly trained airmen were arriving in the Pacific theatre and therefore made many organizational changes to improve the airmen's training. This suggests if he was more engaged with SAC he would have easily recognized the signs of poor training and instituted changes.<sup>54</sup> Kenney saw the results of ignoring the predictions of airfield engineers in WWII who claimed air bases at Leyte would not be ready to accept quickly aircraft during the amphibious landing in 1944, resulting in a terrible loss of air support to the infantry.<sup>55</sup> SAC was facing similar challenges in 1948 regarding the limitations of the forward bases required to implement the JCS war plans, a problem he would have highlighted to Air Force and JCS leadership, ensuring the problems gained the attention they deserved. In WWII, Kenney had also encouraged innovation in his command, allowing creative thinking to

---

<sup>53</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 147.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas E Griffith, *MacArthur's Airman: General George C. Kenney and the War in the Southwest Pacific* (Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998), 15.

<sup>55</sup> Griffith, *MacArthur's Airman*, 240.



flourish; the exact opposite of what occurred during his absence from SAC in 1947 and 1948.<sup>56</sup>

Post-war parsimony would have made SAC's role in war plans difficult to fulfill in any scenario, but General Kenney's absence allowed Maj Gen McMullen, a man who built his reputation on efficient wartime logistics, to push a training and personnel agenda that shifted the focus from combat effectiveness, resulting in a command with hollow capabilities. Events in June and September 1948 would shift Air Force focus for a while, and provide a stepping-stone for SAC to fix some of its problems.

### **Operation Vittles**

On March 16, 1948, Secretary Symington told the House Subcommittee on Military Appropriations the Air Force serves two purposes: to be "an active deterrent to any aggressor," and to be the "force which envelops him in prompt and decisive retaliatory action if he risks war with the United States."<sup>57</sup> The Air Force was about to prove a third asset, its capacity to give the other instruments of national power time to function.

On April 1, 1948, the Soviet Commander in Germany gave notice that his troops would begin to inspect allied trains and trucks going into Berlin. By June 24, Soviet troops effectively halted all rail and road traffic from the West into Berlin due to their fear that Western nations would consolidate Western Germany under a single Western currency. In retaliation to the blockade, the Western allies began an airlift to bring supplies to isolated West Berliners, known as Operation Vittles. The American and British Air Forces supplied West Berlin for 11 months, allowing the Soviet dictator only two options: further military conflict or diplomatic settlement. On May 12, 1949, after several rounds of

---

<sup>56</sup> Griffith, *MacArthur's Airman*, 237.

<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:234.



diplomatic talks and the delivery of over 1.7 million tons of supplies by USAF, the Soviet Union agreed to lift the blockade in exchange for a meeting of the Council of Foreign Ministers in order to “consider questions relating to Germany.”<sup>58</sup> *Air Force Magazine* touted that “for the first time in history, the United States is employing its Air Force as a diplomatic weapon.”<sup>59</sup>

While the Military Air Transport Command proved its capability, SAC also was a part of American strategic messaging to the Soviet Union during the blockade of Berlin. On June 26, 1948, British Prime Minister Ernest Bevin suggested that while the US airlift was buying time for negotiations, the United States should send heavy bombers to Europe to send a message to the Soviets. General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, USAF Chief of Staff, had desired to deploy SAC units to Europe for quite some time, and now his window of opportunity had arrived. On 17 July, sixty B-29s began to move from the United States to England. None of them were Silver Plate bombers though, which confused military planners trying to decipher the President’s policy toward using atomic weapons. It remains unclear whether the USSR knew the bombers were not atomic capable. Therefore, their actual deterrent is in question, but it showed many American politicians another manner in which the United States could use airpower against the Soviet Union.<sup>60</sup>

One important result of the Berlin Airlift was that the US government began to consider the concept of deterrence. In November 1948, the National Security Council formally adopted deterrence as a part of defense planning. The nation, the Security Council concluded, must “develop a level of readiness which can be maintained as long as necessary as a deterrent to Soviet aggression.”<sup>61</sup> This led to the United

---

<sup>58</sup> Quoted in Miller, *To Save a City*, 181, 186.

<sup>59</sup> Quoted in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:236.

<sup>60</sup> Miller, *To Save a City*, 46–47.

<sup>61</sup> Quoted in Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 138.

States expanding its production schedule of atomic weapons, thus increasing the possibility of building a stockpile sufficient to deter.

Although the Berlin airlift was a dramatic strategic victory for the United States and the USAF, it was not enough to break President Truman's fiscal austerity. In the summer of 1948, Truman established a ceiling of \$14.4 billion for fiscal year 1950, up \$3.4 billion from the 1949 figure, but still far from the levels USAF planners needed to field 70 fully combat effective groups.<sup>62</sup> The Air force was left with \$5.025 billion to fulfill its mission: to first launch a powerful air offensive against the USSR with atomic weapons, then to provide for air defense of the United States, and finally to provide the "air components necessary for the advancement, intensification, and/or diversification of our initial offensive until forces generated from inadequate mobilization bases have become available."<sup>63</sup> This limited budget forced the Air Force to reduce its force structure plans to only 48 groups on February 5, 1949, down from the earlier goals of 70 and 55 groups. Congress did not agree with President Truman's constrained budget and believed the USAF needed more resources to provide for national defense. Therefore, in March 1949, Congress added \$726 million to the Air Force Budget for 1950, which was enough for the service to create its requested 70 groups. Truman continued to disagree and subsequently impounded the additional money and ordered the Air Force kept to 48 groups.<sup>64</sup> Despite the dramatic hardening of US-USSR relations, President Truman was not yet ready to surrender his domestic priorities for military needs.

### **SAC Focuses on Effectiveness and Specialization**

By the fall of 1948, the USAF had established its air bridge to Berlin, and although no one knew how long the Air Force would need to

---

<sup>62</sup> Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:241.

<sup>63</sup> Memo, From Sec of USAF to Sec of Def, sub: The Air Force 48 Group Program, 25 Feb 1949, in Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:242.

<sup>64</sup> Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:247, 250.

continue that mission, General Vandenberg was ready to return his focus to the problems at SAC, which still occupied the vanguard in U.S. defense plans. LeMay's efforts in Europe impressed Vandenberg, and so he looked to LeMay to fix all that was wrong with SAC.

General LeMay became the commander of SAC in September 1948, and was largely dismayed with the situation General Kenney had left him. As he sized up his new organization, he found the force responsible for delivering the nation's atomic weapons to be inadequate, ill-trained, and lacking the military capability to support NSC goals and aims. LeMay believed he "didn't have one crew, not one crew in the entire command who could do a professional job. Not one of the outfits was up to strength—neither in airplanes nor in people nor anything else."<sup>65</sup> When asked if he thought moving SAC to its new headquarters in Offutt Field in Nebraska was a great thing for Omaha, he blurted out that "it doesn't mean a damn thing to Omaha, and it doesn't mean a damn thing to me."<sup>66</sup> He did not intend to stiff-arm the local community with his rough response; it was simply an expression of his immense discontent with his new organization. He knew a day might come soon when the nation would depend upon the effectiveness SAC, and he knew SAC was not effective in its current state.

General LeMay was one of the few Americans to understand how the character of war had changed in just three years. Atomic bombs, long-range aircraft, and the development of jet aircraft were changing combat dramatically. He needed to change the way people thought, especially those assigned to SAC. "My determination was to put everyone in SAC in this frame of mind: *We are at war now*. So that if actually we did go to war the very next morning or even that night, we would stumble

---

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Curtis LeMay and MacKinlay Kantor, *Mission with LeMay: My Story*, First Edition (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1965), 429–430.

<sup>66</sup> Quoted in Warren Kozak, *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2009), 280.

through no period in which preliminary motions would be wasted. We had to be ready to go *then*.”<sup>67</sup> General LeMay knew there was no time for a second chance in atomic warfare.

LeMay shifted the focus of SAC from efficiency to effectiveness, using the training and organizing of personnel as his primary vehicle for reforging SAC as a combat weapon. He attacked maintenance issues by instituting a maintenance control system where a handful of maintainers only worked on one aircraft to instill a sense of pride and ownership to better anticipate and fix equipment failures. He shifted the training focus by eliminating many arctic exercises, mapping projects, and antisubmarine drills, so the aviators could focus on the primary mission of delivering atomic weapons. General LeMay invented the dreaded Operational Readiness Inspection (ORI), an unannounced visit to a base during which its combat readiness would be tested. He also pushed annual SAC bombing competitions, further instilling a sense of pride as he pitted wings against each other, the victors returning home as base heroes, lifting the morale of an entire base. In June 1949, he established the Lead Crew School, where the best crews from each wing trained together to develop SAC-wide best bombing practices, eliminating the myriad and varied techniques that had pervaded the command. Lastly, General LeMay attacked the base support facilities, ensuring a better environment for aviators off duty, and he developed a ‘spot promotion’ system where the command could formally recognize the outstanding performance of crews by temporarily bumping them into the next higher pay grade.

General LeMay’s institutional changes began to increase the combat effectiveness of SAC, especially after October 1949, when the Air Force chief of staff directed that the “first priority [went] to those units

---

<sup>67</sup> Quoted in LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 436.

comprising the Strategic Striking Force.”<sup>68</sup> Charles Lindberg went back to review SAC’s capabilities early in 1949 and already noted a small shift for the better in its combat readiness.

LeMay knew it would take time to see the full fruits of his efforts, though. In November 1948, Lt Gen Muir S. Fairchild, AF Vice Chief of Staff, assembled a board of officers and civilians to study every aspect of past and present bombing methods and to suggest new actions and procedures. They discovered SAC’s bombing training typically consisted of using large radar reflectors to aim their bombs, a completely unrealistic method compared to a wartime environment.<sup>69</sup> LeMay realized that in addition to changing the way his men trained, he needed to acquire more equipment, increase manpower, and extend the combat range of his bombers. Since the Berlin Airlift was still ongoing, and President Truman had not released the fiscal shackles from the military, if SAC wanted additional resources, it would have to compete with other military branches and AF commands to get it. LeMay considered this battle critical for building a credible force.

As General LeMay refocused the efforts of SAC, its status and funding rose, but the zero-sum nature of Air Force budgeting meant the luster of TAC waned. Although the Air Force created TAC, SAC, and ADC as three equal pillars of combat airpower in 1946, by December 1948 the Air Force gutted the subordinate units from TAC and assigned them to the newly formed Continental Air Command. The USAF was beginning to prioritize its resources away from TAC. General Pete Quesada, commander of TAC, felt the air force was making an “ugly mistake.” It was forgetting the “teachings of the war in Europe,” and turning its back on a promise made to General Eisenhower and the Army to hold fast on

---

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Meilinger, *Bomber*, 135.

<sup>69</sup> Borowski, *A Hollow Threat*, 148.

tactical air roles.<sup>70</sup> He had fought hard to integrate a close air support system between the Army and the Air Force, and this appeared to be the first large step undoing years of his own personal toiling. Strategic Air Command “enjoyed a clear primacy within the Air Force...as its prestige rose, that of tactical aviation declined.”<sup>71</sup> As the USAF pushed the majority of its limited resources to SAC, TAC suffered. TAC shrunk from 11 groups and over 31,000 men near the end of 1948, to just a headquarter staff manned by 150 personnel. In contrast, as the USAF strength shrunk to 48 groups in 1949, SAC actually grew from 18 to 19 groups.

The doctrinal focus of the Air Force increasingly centered on SAC’s strategic bombing capabilities, creating chasm between the USAF and the Army as well. Army leaders were very dissatisfied with the USAF deemphasis on tactical aviation. In response, the USAF convened a Board of Review for tactical air operations in 1949, consisting of Gen Quesada and Maj Gen Otto Weyland. The board’s report dismissed the Army’s concerns, but still criticized Air Force policies. Even within TAC, not all officers were committed to tactical aviation. Col William Momyer, assistant chief of staff at TAC, did not foresee his organization getting involved in hostilities unless an atomic offensive failed. Momyer even thought his escort fighters were an “obsolete concept of the last war” because of the new bombers range and altitude.<sup>72</sup> It would be almost two years before the Air Force saw a need for a robust TAC again, largely due to the demands of Congress, the other services, and a new war. It was not until the USAF faced the Korean War’s demand for tactical

---

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Thomas Alexander Hughes, *Over Lord: General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1995), 311–312.

<sup>71</sup> Quoted in Warren Trest and George Watson, “Framing Air Force Missions,” in *Winged Shield, Winged Sword*, ed. Bernard Nalty, vol. 1 (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997), 399–400.

<sup>72</sup> Quoted in Conrad C Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 21–22.



aviation that it eventually reinstated TAC as a major command, on December 1, 1950.<sup>73</sup>

While the USAF focused on internal issues, there was another global shift in power occurring. On September 3, 1949, a teletype report alerted the headquarters of the Air Force's Long Range Detection System that a USAF WB-29 on routine patrol from Japan to Alaska had detected some radioactivity.<sup>74</sup> By September 20, General Vandenberg met with several prestigious analysts from Great Britain, the Los Alamos laboratories, and the Naval Research laboratories; each had analyzed the data collected on September 3 and on subsequent missions. By the end of the meeting, General Vandenberg was convinced the Soviet Union had detonated an atomic bomb. That same day he sent a letter to the Secretary of Defense, "I believe an atomic bomb has been detonated over the Asiatic land mass during the period 26 August 1949 to 29 August 1949...Conclusions by our scientists based on physical and radiochemical analyses of collected data have been confirmed by scientists of the Atomic Energy Commission, United Kingdom, and Office of Naval Research."<sup>75</sup> On September 23, 1949, President Truman publicly announced that the Soviet Union had detonated its first atomic weapon, furthering the argument of the USAF to create a strong retaliatory atomic strike capability, even if it meant diminishing its capability in tactical airpower.

Although the announcement of Soviet acquisition of an atomic weapon was important, it too was not enough to break President Truman's unwavering hold on defense spending. His initial budget proposal for 1951 included only \$13 billion for defense, down from \$14.3

---

<sup>73</sup> Alfred Goldberg, *A History of the United States Air Force, 1907-1957* (Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1957), 139-140.

<sup>74</sup> Richard Hewlett and Francis Duncan, *The History of the Atomic Energy Commission*, vol. 2 (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1969), 262.

<sup>75</sup> Quoted in Jeffrey Richelson, *Spying on the Bomb: American Nuclear Intelligence from Nazi Germany to Iran and North Korea* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006), 90-91.



for 1950. It was clear that only one type of event might get him to change his views. Unbeknownst to politicians and military leaders alike, that event was looming on the horizon in the summer of 1950.

General LeMay did a more complete and effective job than General Kenney at commanding SAC, but the context surrounding their time of command was quite different. General LeMay himself knew he worked in a different environment than Kenney. General Kenney was trying to “hold something together which was being torn down.” By the time LeMay was in command, he felt “Washington had become scared, they were ready to help me start to build the thing back up again, and sharpen it to a point of proficiency never previously attained.”<sup>76</sup> Even though President Truman continued to sideline military spending, Congress and the American people were beginning to break the mindset from the 1930s that the United States could rely upon ocean moats and a small military in times of peace.

### **Korean War**

On June 25, 1950, the North Korean People’s Army invaded South Korea, setting the stage for a limited war the USAF was not organized or trained to fight. The USAF had been struggling to prepare SAC for an unlimited atomic war with the Soviets, and now found itself pulled into a fight that depended upon TAC and the Far East Air Forces (FEAF) to conduct interdiction and close air support (CAS)—missions the USAF was not well organized, trained, or equipped to fight.

At the outbreak of war in Korea, the FEAF had only one minor mission assigned, to provide for the safety of American nationals. The FEAF prepared not only for the transport of personnel from Korea, but also to be ready to engage hostile air and ground targets in support of the evacuation. On June 26, General MacArthur ordered the FEAF to provide fighter cover to US freighters embarking Americans at the Inchon

---

<sup>76</sup> Quoted in LeMay and Kantor, *Mission with LeMay*, 441.

port. The fighters were to remain offshore at all times, but were allowed to fire in defense of the freighters if required. By midnight, the ROK Army recognized they could not stop the North Korean tanks from advancing on Seoul within a day, therefore the US ambassador requested an emergency air evacuation from General MacArthur the next morning. The FEAF quickly reacted, moving 748 people from Korea to Japan that day, despite Yak fighters from North Korea attempting attacks on the helpless USAF transport aircraft. FEAF fighters shot down six North Korean aircraft that day, but the fighters were not allowed to help the ROK Army, which was begging for American air support. By the morning of June 27, it was “starkly apparent that the Republic of Korea could not survive without active American military assistance.”<sup>77</sup>

On the afternoon of June 27, General MacArthur was directed by Washington to use air and naval forces to support the South Koreans. The USAF scrambled to ready its B-29 squadrons for targets of opportunity consisting of enemy tanks, artillery, and military columns. Despite their early efforts, these aircraft were ill trained and equipped to find, locate, and destroy small targets of opportunity in the rolling terrain of Korea. The USAF was also limited by the initial rules of engagement directed from Washington. American aircraft were not allowed to attack targets in North Korea, even though this is where the North Korean Air Force kept its 130 combat aircraft, and General Stratemyer understood the first task of combat airpower was to achieve air superiority.

By the afternoon of June 29, Stratemyer convinced MacArthur to let the Air Force attack targets in North Korea. MacArthur was told of the continued North Korean offensive, and had witnessed firsthand a North Korean air attack while visiting Suwon airfield. General MacArthur took a risk and gave the FEAF the verbal order to hit the

---

<sup>77</sup> Robert Futrell, *The United States Air Force in Korea, 1950-1953*, 3rd ed. (Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2000), 13.

North Koreans on their own territory.<sup>78</sup> Despite a rapid shift in FEAF to targets North of the 38<sup>th</sup> parallel, without a US Army presence on the ground, the FEAF could not stop the onslaught of the North Korean Army. The FEAF tactical aircraft scrambled to work with the few tactical air control parties it had on the ground, but most lacked both the equipment and proficient training to be effective. They were also supporting the South Korean Army at this point, so just finding accurate locations of friendly troops proved difficult. The tide of the war did not change until the United States committed ground troops to assist Korea, and even then, it was not an instant victory. The opening days of the Korean war resulted in a rapid retreat across Korean peninsula due to a hesitation on America's part to provide immediate air and ground support to the ROK. Even when the support did come, the methods for providing close air support had atrophied and much of the USAF inventory was not capable of providing reliable support to ground forces. Despite rapidly achieving air superiority, the FEAF struggled initially to fulfill its new ground support role.

Despite the past focus on unlimited war, the war forced the USAF to adapt quickly to the limited nature of the Korean war. In June 1950, the FEAF, under the command of Lt Gen George Stratemeyer, had only 22 B-26s, 12 B-29s, 70 F-80s, and 15 F-82s available for missions in Korea. The FEAF focused the majority of these assets on the air defense of Japan instead of on close air support or other bombing missions crucial to the war in Korea. The command did not have the required resources to train for all of its expected missions. In late June, General Stratemeyer asked for 163 F-80 jets, 22 B-26s, 23 B-29s, and 64 F-51s. The USAF did not have many F-80s in its inventory; therefore, FEAF received 150 F-51s instead. This was fortunate initially, because a propeller driven aircraft such as the F-51 could handle the austere

---

<sup>78</sup> Futrell, *The USAF in Korea*, 32.

airfield conditions found throughout Korea at the time, even though the F-80s could fly more sorties in the same amount of time due to better availability of parts and less required maintenance.<sup>79</sup>

By result of individual acumen, enough latent power existed within tactical units to overcome their prior neglect. Korea's first year of war witnessed the FEAF providing primarily for interdiction and close air support of ground forces, along with air superiority. The USAF had not forgotten the need to gain air superiority from WWII, and the FEAF quickly destroyed the North Korean Air Force, although it would run into trouble later as Chinese Mig-15 fighters entered the war.<sup>80</sup> MacArthur and Stratemeyer's Far East Air Forces had not had the resources for training in CAS before the war began, but they managed to cobble together the forces to provide for effective CAS and interdiction throughout the war. By the wars end, the FEAF had dropped 476,000 tons of ordnance, destroying 827 bridges, 116,839 buildings, 869 locomotives, 14,906 railcars, and 74,859 vehicles.<sup>81</sup>

While there were plenty of mistakes made along the way, the United States survived the body blow of the Korean War, politically and militarily. An armistice agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, and the United Nations forces halted communist aggressions on the Korean peninsula. Airpower, including both tactical and SAC assets, did much for MacArthur. "It had slowed the communist advance, stiffened his defense of the Pusan perimeter, helped smash the enemy in his counteroffensive, and wiped out most of North Korea's industry."<sup>82</sup>

The starkest contrast of 1950 to the previous five years was not only the war, but the effect it had on military budgets. The Air Force reequipped itself, as Korean War proved to be the key to unlock the

---

<sup>79</sup> Crane, *Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 24–30.

<sup>80</sup> Mark Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>81</sup> Clodfelter, *The Limits of Air Power*, 22.

<sup>82</sup> Quoted in Crane, *Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 55.

President's economic handcuffs. Although he initially approved for a \$13.3 billion defense budget for 1951, by May 1951 the total of all allocations added up to \$48.2 billion. In the previous year, the President authorized only 1,246 for Air Force procurement. In 1951, the USAF was allowed to place orders for 8,578 aircraft, expanding to 95 wings.<sup>83</sup>

At the start of the Korean War, the USAF had only 416,314 personnel, and could only maintain 42 of 48 authorized air wings. In November 1951, the JCS agreed on a USAF goal of 1.2 million personnel and 143 wings. By the end of the war, the USAF had over 100 wings and over one million officers and men.<sup>84</sup> It took a full-blown war for President Truman to relax his pressure on defense spending.

### **Summary**

After gaining its independence in 1947, the USAF set its sights on fulfilling its guiding policy through a series of coherent actions and embracing its new role as the vanguard of national defense. It was challenged by tight budget constraints and limited resources. This forced Generals Spaatz and Vandenberg to prioritize the Strategic Air Command and its strategic bombing mission above the other commands because the independent strategic bombing mission was the key to providing economical national security through deterrence. This matched the shift in international relations as the United States announced the Truman doctrine and the Marshall plan. Despite the icy relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States, President Truman did not increase military spending. SAC fell apart as its leaders focused so intently on efficiency and generalization that the command had no capability. The cross-training program combined with personnel limitations to break the combat effectiveness of the command.

---

<sup>83</sup> Futrell, *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine*, 1:317–319.

<sup>84</sup> Crane, *Airpower Strategy in Korea*, 93.

In the summer of 1948, the Soviets blockaded West Berlin, giving the USAF airlift community an opportunity to save the city. This incident also hardened the nation's view of Stalin, resulting in increased congressional support for the Air Force. General Vandenberg also decided to replace the failing leadership of SAC with the proven leader of the Berlin Airlift. General LeMay took over SAC in the fall of 1948 and immediately changed the entire organizations culture. He devised competitions and fixed facilities to increase morale while also focusing on making the command more specialized and combat effective. His leadership skills combined with a shifting congressional trend away from austerity to make SAC a formidable deterrent.

When the Korean War started in the summer of 1950, Air Force commanders and joint planners were all caught off guard. Despite a lack in tactical training and resources, the USAF rebounded to provide General Macarthur the support he needed to hold off the North Korean aggressors. The war also triggered President Truman to approve a military budget that provided for a large air force. Despite the three years of war that followed, the United States and the USAF survived the war and stopped the spread of communism, a strategic success.

During this challenging period, USAF leaders successfully navigated a minefield by sternly prioritizing its limited resources through a series of coherent actions. It would have been better if the FEAF was more prepared for CAS missions when the Korean war started, but Generals Spaatz and Vandenberg had made tough choices in austere budget environments. They emphasized the importance of the atomic bomber mission, not just because it was the backbone of the Air Force independence case, but because the USSR was the most likely and most dangerous enemy, and JCS plans required them to do so, the only way to fight the Soviets effectively would be with atomic bombers. USAF leaders' ability to link Air Force priorities to National Political objectives by prioritizing the bomber force demonstrated a harsh and hard choice for

leaders, and one, despite the problems of the Korean war, that served the national well in the years ahead. This ability to align a limited set of priorities to National Security, through coherent actions that support a guiding policy and strategy, are also critical in today's strategic context.





## Conclusion and Evaluation

Between World War II and the Korean War, the United States Air Force, at its birth, faced a unique constellation of challenges. All of the services were torn down between 1945 and 1950, but the Air Force was the only one that also had to stand-up on its own. This occurred at a moment in time unlike any other, when political leaders looked to an infant force to provide the primary defense of the nation. The Air Force leaders effectively created a strategy containing a diagnosis, a guiding policy, and a series of coherent actions. This kernel of Air Force strategy led to success.<sup>1</sup> While there was room for improvement in specific focus areas, the budding Air Force weathered the contextual storm quite well, and accomplished its primary task of defending the nation by surviving the body blow of Korea while defending against a Soviet uppercut, a far more dangerous possibility in the age of Cold War.

The Air Force and its early leaders accomplished all this by prioritizing quality during the destruction of the AAF, the creation of the USAF, and the fulfillment of the organization's obligations to the nation. They accomplish this in a tale that still resonates today, in 2014, when the Air Force is again impinged by mandated limitations, constrained by resources, and faces a world that is becoming more ambiguous. Between 1945 and 1950, AAF leaders diagnosed a combination of demobilization, constrained resources, and other nations' air forces as a threat to the future defense of the United States; they declared gaining an independent Air Force based on strategic bombing as their guiding principle, and used reorganization, prioritization, and competition as their vehicles for coherent action to accomplish their strategy. In this manner, the Air Force strategy succeeded.

---

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter 5 for a discussion of 'The Kernel of Good Strategy' in Richard Rumelt, *Good Strategy Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters* (New York: Crown Business, 2011), 77–94.

AAF leaders prioritized the quality of its manpower above all else during the demobilization of World War II. Unlike the hasty last minute planning effort following WWI, leaders began planning for the demobilization and eventual end of WWII almost as soon as the United States became involved. The Army focused on the fairness of demobilization and trying to keep the American public happy, but General Arnold and other AAF leaders fought against General Marshall and the War Department in order to prioritize the quality of retained airmen over the perceived fairness of their method. The AAF used human judgment and efficiency reports, while the Army relied upon statistics and a soldier's Adjusted Service Rating. While General Arnold struggled to keep the best airmen, General Spaatz struggled to find an optimum balance between rated and nonrated officers within the service.

Later, Generals Kenney and LeMay faced similar concerns within SAC. Spaatz and Kenney were constrained by the limitations of Congress, forcing them to emphasize efficiency, leading to a small percentage of nonrated personnel, driving rated officers to perform many nonflying related tasks. This created a force so focused on efficiency, that its aircrew became completely ineffective. As the civilian limitations began to lift following the Berlin Airlift, General Vandenberg and LeMay brought in more nonrated officers, allowing SAC aircrew to become more effective at their primary task, nuclear bombing. The AAF, USAF, and SAC prioritization of a skilled and balanced workforce was critical to its future success due to the technical nature of their work, work that heavily depended upon the maintenance of its advanced resources to be combat effective. Although the AAF shrank from 2.3 million men and 218 combat effective air groups to just 303,000 airmen and only 2 combat effective groups, the Air Force may have never recovered from this nadir without focusing on the quality of its future personnel.

As General Arnold and General Spaatz led through demobilization, they established creating an independent Air Force as their guiding

policy. They did so using their strategic bombing message combined with describing foreign threats to the nation. General Arnold fought the external threats from General Marshall's UMT program by selling Congress and the public on his vision of the future, a future in which the United States was not safe without strong force in being. He sold America the fearful portrait of a future where the oceans bordering the country no longer protected it from new technologically advanced aircraft, a fight it could not afford to lose. The Air Force then based all force structure arguments and considerations around the most dangerous fight by concentrating on an offensive force. The Air Force also used this consideration to challenge the Navy when it confronted General Arnold's drive for autonomy. The Navy desired a large flattop aircraft carrier that was large enough to support nuclear capable bombers, but Arnold successfully argued this was duplication in offensive capability the nation could not afford. General Arnold and General Spaatz ultimately secured Air Force independence not only by dominating military strategic messaging, but also by striking compromises with both Army and Navy leaders. Arnold and Spaatz agreed not to abandon future tactical support of the Army, and not to seek the acquisition of all naval aviation assets, furthering their own goal. These compromises and strategic messages opened a window of opportunity for the nation's civilian leaders to accept the United States Air Force as an equal partner in national defense, no longer constrained by Army leadership.

The newly formed Air Force then moved to provide the defense of the United States in the best manner possible through a series of coherent actions prioritizing its nuclear offensive bombing capability. In order to accomplish this, Generals Spaatz, Vandenberg, and LeMay realized they must force many internal changes within the organization. Early on, AAF planners identified the Soviet Union as the nation's most dangerous enemy, due to its relative post-war strength, its vast national

resources, and because it was a country the United States Navy could little affect. In a world of increasing ambiguity, joint planners agreed, who then helped propel the Air Force to the center of all operational war plans, giving the USAF another edge in fighting the Navy for a share of the budget as the only service capable of nuclear bombing. The Strategic Air Command was unable at first to meet this obligation. As a result, General Vandenberg prioritized SAC over TAC in a series of hard choices. He cut TAC and ADC down to the bare bone in order to promote and nurture SAC. This critical move fulfilled the USAF's obligations to the Joint War Plans and the nation's defense, but turned its back on the Air Force's promise to the Army, and its ability to conduct anything other than nuclear war. This decision marked a turning point for the Air Force, one that would shape the service for decades, but one that was necessary for the nation's continued success. The Korean War quickly tested this decision and scared airmen, Congressmen, and the President from their fiscal constraints. "As Mark Clodfelter and Earl Tilford have chronicled, the Air Force had the wrong doctrine, equipment, and training to deal with limited war in Southeast Asia."<sup>2</sup> But Korea was a fight in which the nation could afford to lose the first few rounds. The destructive force of demobilization, the constraints of civilian leaders, and the ambiguous character of the international stage culminated to create a situation where the USAF correctly prioritized a singular mission for the long-term benefit of the United States.

Air Force leaders today would do well to heed these lessons and methods of strategy and prioritization from the late 1940s. Today, external factors again impinge Air Force structure. In the five-year period between 2010 and 2015, the active duty Air Force authorized

---

<sup>2</sup> Conrad C Crane, *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000), 178.

strength will drop by approximately 20,800 people, or 6.3 percent.<sup>3</sup> This is largely a result of ending a war in Iraq, and another in Afghanistan, as well as Congressional sequestration actions. In contrast, between 1945 and 1947, a period of only three years, the AAF authorized strength decreased by 2.01 million people, or 86 percent.<sup>4</sup> Although a direct comparison between the 1940s and today is troublesome for many reasons—today’s Air Force is all volunteer, the percentage decrease is far less, and separation pay is a tool used more often—the Air Force could do better by prioritizing the quality of personnel it keeps, as it did in the late 1940s, by using only a reduction in force board instead of separation pay, allowing the service to shed its least useful personnel, not incentivizing its best to leave. In 2014, the USAF is slated to spend \$108 million on voluntary separation pay for 1,137 officers and \$120 million for 2,928 enlisted members.<sup>5</sup> This continued use of fiscal incentives not only encourages highly qualified members to seek employment elsewhere, but also is wasteful and does not focus on shedding those members least desirable to the service. At least the USAF is using these methods in conjunction with early retirement and involuntary separation methods.

The Air Force is also fighting Congressional constraints for resources today. In the five years between 2010 and 2015, the authorized Air Force ‘blue’ budget will decrease by 6.3 billion dollars, or 5.4 percent.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, and again showing the scale of the problem between 1946 and 1949, the Air Force budget decreased by 34 billion

---

<sup>3</sup> Comparison between the 2010 and 2015 fiscal year data found in “The United States Air Force Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Overview” (United States Air Force, March 2014), <http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/budget/>.

<sup>4</sup> Carl Spaatz, *Report of the Chief of Staff United States Air Force to the Secretary of the Air Force* (Washington DC: Department of the Air Force, June 30, 1948), 10–13.

<sup>5</sup> “Cash to Leave in 2015: AF Cranks up Retirement, Separation Budget,” *Air Force Times*, accessed May 24, 2014, <http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20140324/CAREERS/303240029/Cash-leave-2015-AF-cranks-up-retirement-separation-budget>.

<sup>6</sup> “USAF FY 2015 Budget Overview.”

dollars, or 75 percent. In the late 1940s, when the AAF was sufficiently threatened, it out planned the Army and outfought the Navy for resources and for its independence. Today, arguably, the Army feels more threatened by Congressional cuts and a national desire to avoid protracted ground wars than the Air Force. Some people also feel the Army has a better strategic message than the USAF in the fight for resources, reflecting a reversal of the conditions of the late 1940s. Today, the USAF should change its strategic message to prioritize fewer, not more, mission areas. It needs to return to a line of argument from the 1940s, centered on achieving national security using the nation's most economical force, the USAF. In the past five years, the USAF has had between 5 and 13 priorities; instead, it should create a simpler argument by focusing on fewer mission areas to address the use of force in an uncertain world.

Just as after World War II, the world is ambiguous. Today, this pattern is best seen in the shifting of national wealth. In the last 30 years, the United States' share of global wealth has declined. This is especially true since 2001, when the United States had 23.7% of global wealth, today it is only 19.2 percent, and it is predicted to continue falling.<sup>7</sup> If this continues, it may result in a multipolar world order where there is no hegemon, and therefore force becomes a commodity used more readily. In this type of world, long protracted wars are less likely than frequent skirmishes, the type that may occur anywhere in the world, and where the rapid capabilities of combat airpower are most advantageous. The Air Force must be prepared to fight in this global environment, and to do so it must prioritize its combat airpower.

---

<sup>7</sup> Data set is GDP based on PPP as a percentage of world GDP, it was as high as 25.6% in 1985, and is predicted to be only 19.2% by 2019, from *IMF Datamapper: World Economic Outlook* (International Monetary Fund, April 2014), <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/index.php>.



The Air Force cannot survive if it continues to prioritize everything; it will be enveloped by peacetime constraints and impingements in the face of an ambiguous world. Air Force leaders must decide which fight the nation cannot afford to lose, and it must focus all its resources on that fight. That fight may be an air war against a competitor with advanced capabilities similar to those attained by the current USAF. To win that fight will likely take more high technology fighters and bombers than the service currently owns. The next fight may be fought by cyber-warriors on a digital battlefield that changes the character of war, and this war may have already started in a covert domain that nations do not yet acknowledge openly. The next war may also be similar to the anti-terrorism wars recently fought in Afghanistan and Iraq, requiring a completely different force structure than the previous two scenarios begs. This ambiguous future is what Air Force leaders are challenged with today. If the lessons of the late 1940s rhyme at all with the situation of today, the United States Air Force needs to prioritize cutting-edge combat airpower capability above all else to ensure the nation is prepared to fight the most dangerous fight, the war it cannot afford to lose. This strategy must show how the USAF is the most efficient and effective solution to satisfy national security goals and objectives in today's changing international power structure—the lesson of 1945-1950.

This is a hard task, to be sure, but not more difficult than that faced by Airmen following World War II. Then, the air arm shrank drastically, built anew, and took a prominent place in the nation's defense. Airmen today could do much worse than to look to these forebears for inspiration, guidance, and fortitude going forward. The nation's citizenry counts on it.



## Bibliography

- "Americans Bomb Germans for First Time." *The History Channel Website*. Accessed February 10, 2014. <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/americans-bomb-germans-for-first-time>.
- Arnold, Henry H. *Global Mission*. New York: Hutchinson & Company, 1951.
- Barlow, Jeffrey G. *Revolt of the Admirals: The Fight for Naval Aviation, 1945-1950*. Washington, DC: Government Reprint Press, 2001.
- Borowski, Harry. *A Hollow Threat: Strategic Air Power and Containment before Korea*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1982.
- "Cash to Leave in 2015: AF Cranks up Retirement, Separation Budget." *Air Force Times*. Accessed May 24, 2014. <http://www.airforcetimes.com/article/20140324/CAREERS/303240029/Cash-leave-2015-AF-cranks-up-retirement-separation-budget>.
- Cave Brown, Anthony, ed. *Drop Shot: The United States Plan for War with the Soviet Union in 1957*. New York, NY: Dial Press/James Wade, 1978.
- Clodfelter, Mark. *The Limits of Air Power: The American Bombing of North Vietnam*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006.
- Crane, Conrad C. *American Airpower Strategy in Korea, 1950-1953*. Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 2000.
- Craven, Wesley Frank, and James Lea Cate, eds. *The Army Air Forces in World War II*. Vol. 7. 7 vols. Services Around the World. Washington, DC: Office of Air Force History, 1983.
- Futrell, Robert. *Ideas, Concepts, Doctrine: Basic Thinking in the United States Air Force, 1907-1960*. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Maxwell AFB, AL: Air University Press, 1989.
- . *The United States Air Force in Korea, 1950-1953*. 3rd ed. Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2000.
- Gentile, Gian. *How Effective Is Strategic Bombing?: Lessons Learned from World War II to Kosovo*. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2001.
- . "Planning for Preventive War, 1945-1950." *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Spring 2000, 68-74.
- Goldberg, Alfred. *A History of the United States Air Force, 1907-1957*. Princeton, NJ: D. Van Nostrand Company, Inc., 1957.
- Grandstaff, Mark. *Foundation of the Force: Air Force Enlisted Personnel Policy, 1907-1956*. Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997.
- Griffith, Thomas E. *MacArthur's Airman: General George C. Kenney and the War in the Southwest Pacific*. Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 1998.

- Hardesty, Von, and Ilya Grinberg. *Red Phoenix Rising: The Soviet Air Force in World War II*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012.
- Hewlett, Richard, and Francis Duncan. *The History of the Atomic Energy Commission*. Vol. 2. 3 vols. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1969.
- Holmes, Richard. *The Oxford Companion to Military History*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2003.
- Hughes, Thomas Alexander. *Over Lord: General Pete Quesada and the Triumph of Tactical Air Power in World War II*. New York, NY: The Free Press, 1995.
- IMF Datamapper: *World Economic Outlook*. International Monetary Fund, April 2014. <http://www.imf.org/external/datamapper/index.php>.
- Kozak, Warren. *LeMay: The Life and Wars of General Curtis LeMay*. Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 2009.
- LeMay, Curtis, and MacKinlay Kantor. *Mission with LeMay: My Story*. First Edition. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1965.
- March, Peyton C. *The Nation at War*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc, 1932.
- Meilinger, Phillip S. *Bomber: The Formation and Early Years of Strategic Air Command*. Maxwell Air Force Base, Ala.: Air University Press, Air Force Research Institute, 2012.
- Miller, Col Edwin. "The USAF Replacement System for Airmen." Air War College, Air University, February 1949.
- Miller, Roger G. *To Save a City: The Berlin Airlift, 1948-1949*. College Station, TX: Texas A & M University Press, 2008.
- Mitchell, Vance. *Air Force Officers: Personnel Policy Development, 1944-1974*. Washington, D.C.: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1996.
- Mock, James, and Evangeline Thurber. *Report on Demobilization*. Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma, 1944.
- Moody, Walton S. *Building a Strategic Air Force*. Washington DC: United States Government Printing, 1996.
- Murray, Williamson. "Innovation: Past and Future." In *Innovation in the Interwar Period*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996.
- Richelson, Jeffrey. *Spying on the Bomb: American Nuclear Intelligence from Nazi Germany to Iran and North Korea*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2006.
- Ross, Steven. *American War Plans, 1945-1950*. Portland, OR: Frank Cass, 1996.
- Rumelt, Richard. *Good Strategy Bad Strategy: The Difference and Why It Matters*. New York: Crown Business, 2011.
- Sherry, Michael S. *Preparing for the Next War: American Plans for Postwar Defense, 1941-45*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977.
- Shiner, John. *Foulois and the U.S. Army Air Corps: 1931-1935*. Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, 1983.

- Smith, Perry M. *The Air Force Plans for Peace, 1943-1945*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1970.
- Spaatz, Carl. *Report of the Chief of Staff United States Air Force to the Secretary of the Air Force*. Washington DC: Department of the Air Force, June 30, 1948.
- Sparrow, John C. *History of Personnel Demobilization in the United States Army*. Washington Dept of the Army, 1952.
- Stephens, Alan. "George C. Kenney: 'A Kind of Renaissance Airman.'" In *Air Commanders*, edited by John Andreas Olsen. Dulles, VA: Potomac Books, 2013.
- "The United States Air Force Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Overview." United States Air Force, March 2014.  
<http://www.saffm.hq.af.mil/budget/>.
- Trest, Warren, and George Watson. "Framing Air Force Missions." In *Winged Shield, Winged Sword*, edited by Bernard Nalty, Vol. 1. Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 1997.
- Truman, Harry S. *Memoirs by Harry S. Truman: 1945 Year of Decisions*. 1st ed. Vol. 1. 2 vols. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1955.
- . "Statement by the President on Demobilization." Harry S. Truman Library and Museum, January 8, 1946. Public Papers of the Presidents: Harry S. Truman, 1945-1953.  
<http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=1450>.
- USAF Historical Division. "A Historical Study: Redeployment and Demobilization." Air University, June 1953.
- Wolk, Herman S. *Planning and Organizing the Post War Air Force, 1943 - 1947*. Office of Air Force History, 1984.
- . *Reflections on Air Force Independence*. Washington DC: Air Force History and Museums Program, 2007.
- X (George Kennan). "The Sources of Soviet Conduct." *Foreign Affairs*, July 1947, 566-82.